

EXCESSIVE SENSIBILITY;

OR,

THE HISTORY OF

LADY ST. LAURENCE.

A NOVEL.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N:

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EXCESSIVE SENSIBILITY;



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THE HISTORY OF

LADY STEPHENSON

LADY CECILIA EGERTON

A NOVEL

LADY STEPHENSON

VOL. II

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VOL. II. which

EXCESSIVE SENSIBILITY,

A
N O V E L.

LADY CECILIA EGGERTON

TO

LADY ST. LAURENCE.

Eggerton Hall, Dec. 2, 1785.

I ANSWER first, my sister's kind inquiries after the health of Sir George, because it is that in which I am most interested. He is a little better, but not so much as to overcome our intention of going for a month or two to Spa, for

VOL. II.

B

which

which purpose we leave this place next week. I shall not be able to see your *Retreat*, which must be beautifully situated, until my return, when it will be more an object of admiration to me, as the winter will have lost its severity in the mild breezes of spring, and my mind also will be more at ease than at present, as anxiety for the restoration of the health of my husband renders all other objects indifferent, and will not allow me to be at all cheerful, except when I endeavour to call all my spirits up to enliven his, which, at times, are but too low. I hope you have got rid of the indisposition you mentioned in your last. Your account of my father's ill health was confirmed by a letter I received from our old friend and Mentor, Mr. Mordaunt. Sir George intends to make the Vale in our way, and to try his eloquence



eloquence to persuade my father to accompany us. I have succeeded with Eliza, and she is preparing to go with me, but begs me to make every acknowledgment for your kind offer of an asylum, and likewise desires me to say, that should she ever return, she will spend some time with you. She would not have gone with me but that an idea has come into her head of going to spend the remainder of her days in a Convent. I did not oppose this resolution, as I know that, by resistance, some minds are only strengthened in their purpose. Perhaps change of situation, country, and company, may gradually recover both her health and spirits. I do not wonder at her being so extremely bowed down by affliction, but am rather surpris'd that she was enabled to bear up under such a weight of woe. I think she is rather

suppose

B 2

more

more cheerful than when we first met. Sir George enters very much into her story, and pities her misfortunes. You beg me to cheat her out of the name of the wretch, for I cannot call him by any other name. Perhaps when I have gained a little more confidence with her, she may tell me. She wears his picture tied round her neck, but never lets me see it. Indeed I almost fear to find if I should get a stolen glance that it is some one of our acquaintance. We are just returned from the farm; she shed abundance of tears on taking leave of Mrs. Wilmot and family, and they, on their part, were also greatly affected. The good woman said she should have persuaded Miss to stay with her, had it not been to oblige my Ladyship, and, to be sure, my conversation must be a great blessing to her. I promised to bring her back to

2 them,

them, restored to health and spirits. May I be able to make my word good. It shall not be forfeited for want of endeavours. I shall expect long letters whilst I am abroad, giving me an account of what passes within your circle. I would have you, if the Earl of C*** comes to town this winter, pay particular attention to the ladies, and himself. It will be pleasing to your Lord, and they being ceremonious, expect it. I shall leave Julia at the Hall, with her governess. I never think of parting with her, that tears do not instantly start into my eyes. It is a foolish weakness, and I must get over it, as it would be ridiculous to take her from her little studies. You will correspond with Madame Dubois, and should the child want any medical attendance, from indisposition, I have ordered her to town, and Dr. W—

will be attentive to her. Heaven forbid that this should be necessary. I hope to fold my child in my arms on our return, in perfect health, and that we shall all meet without a cloud to overshadow the general joy. Say to your Lord that Sir George joins me in best wishes, and that we have not forgot a promise he made us of spending a few weeks with us here in the spring. May every good attend my dear Julia in my absence, is the sincere wish of

Her affectionate sister,

CECILIA EGGERTON.

THE HON. FRANCIS GREVILLE

To

THE HON. HENRY DILLON.

Belville House, Dec. 10.

YOUR letter reached me at a time when even the wicked cease from troubling, for my father died about two hours before it arrived, and all his cruelty to me was totally forgotten. I will not be hypocritical enough to say I was in excessive grief, but I was led to think seriously on his conduct and on mine. I fear the first transgression was on my part. However, he did me an irreparable injury, for which, while he lived, I never forgave him; but "I war not with the dead," peace be to his ashes, I almost envy him his situation. My brother, now

Earl of Belville, is here also, and, as you say, I think he will not long enjoy the title. I wish not for his death, as it would rather give pain than satisfaction to me; and as to your conjecture about matrimony, be assured I shall never enter into that state, though I have the highest reverence for it, and think there can be no greater bliss on earth than is experienced where two according hearts unite. That situation, I am sure, must form an earthly paradise: yet, charming as must be the attainment of such happiness, I disclaim the idea of it. Therefore, as I do not mean to transmit the name and estate to posterity, I would wish my brother would; and I have just been pointing out the absurdity of his continuing such a round of drinking and dissipation; but he is, like you, incorrigible, and says, he hates morality, and

is

is determined to live and die his own way; that, however, he is obliged to me for my advice. I shall not stay here longer than the funeral is over, as this place is irksome to me on more accounts than one. I only mean this letter as a reply to your inquiry of "when I come to town," as I well know you hate morality as well as him, and that you both agree with a certain author, that "the beginning of a moral should be the end of a letter." I will for this once accord to the sentence to please you, and subscribe myself

Yours,

F. GREVILLE.

TO EXCESSIVE SENSIBILITY,

THE HON. HENRY DILLON

THE HON. FRANCIS GREVILLE.

Dear Frank,

I ARRIVED in the country on Sunday to dinner. *The Retreat* is really most delightfully situated on the side of a hanging wood, with old father Thames in view. You may imagine the rest, for I am horrid at description. We spent the remainder of the day most delightfully. Her Ladyship's taste for music, and her execution, are astonishing. She played and sung divinely almost all the evening. She has great skill in drawing also, is excessively lively, though on my complimenting her on her great flow of spirits, she replied that I did not know the violence

lence with which the opposite extreme pressed sometimes upon the mind, otherwise I would not think these so very great a benefit. We had this morning (being a fine frost) a walk through the wood, in the course of which, we entered into a conversation on the beauties of nature in its rudest state, in which her Ladyship displayed a fine understanding, highly cultivated, and a thorough knowledge of natural history, which, she said, she had studied. I believe there are very few of our modern dames of quality so well employed. I would not have the mode of education her Ladyship says she pursued, adopted by many, as it might serve to draw their attention too much from us. My Lord is obliged to go for a few days to Castle Howard, as the Earl's health will not permit his attendance in parliament this winter.

Her Ladyship removes to town to-morrow, and I have the felicity of accompanying her, as you know it would not be proper for me to remain here with her in her Lord's absence, though faith I would endeavour all in my power to supply his place. However, St. Laurence has desired me to call often in Portland Place, which I should not have failed doing had he not requested me. I shall bring this letter to town with me, and if there is any news there worth notice, I shall be communicative.

On my table I find a letter, with the news of the old Don's death, which does not affect me otherwise than with anxiety to be made acquainted whether he has made any considerable addition to your finances. It is, indeed, not of much consequence, as you will

very

very shortly be Earl of Belville. Don't stay long; you are of a melancholy disposition at best, and gloomy scenes ought to be avoided as much as possible.

I have received two letters from the Ladies Charlotte, and Susan, by the way of rallying me on my new conquest, and on my leaving town to wander in woods, without ever saying farewell, or intimating my intentions. For heaven's sake, do these unconscionable women expect I am to acquaint them with every turn and caprice of my disposition? If so, I ought eternally to hold a pen in my hand. However, I must pay each a visit, and be restored to favour again. I have made a party with Lady St. Laurence to the Pantheon, to-morrow evening, and am commissioned by her to request the company of Lady Susan, and I also

promised

promised to introduce her to Lady Mayne, if she should be there, which I am certain she will be. Sir William and St. Laurence used to visit whilst bachelors, and, of course, will do so now they are married men. This party will reconcile me to the women, for Lady Mayne is dying with impatience to see this paragon of a woman, as she calls her.

I spend this evening in Portland-Place with her Ladyship *tete a tete*, as she expects the arrival of a Miss Mor-daunt, on whom she is very lavish of her encomiums: she is the daughter of the old Rector, who had a share in her Ladyship's education; and the girl has been the companion and play-fellow, and now is, I suppose, the confidante of the lovely Julia. I wish she had not come, as I hate a woman who

has.

has always some one at her elbow to consult, who is very fond of giving advice and caution. However, as it is, I must be attentive to Miss, and she will acquire a regard for me. It will be impossible, however, (should she be handsome) to carry on two intrigues in the same house, and the parties friends and confidantes to each other.

I have employed my bookfeller to furnish me with a number of sentimental Novels, which I mean to present to the library at the *Retreat*. They make a lively impression on susceptible minds, and may be of use. An able General does not always take by storm, but undermines the works, and renders himself more service that way, than by open battle. I want to get her to play, and I think I shall accomplish it, —but all in good time. Lady Cecilia

Eggerton

Eggerton and Sir George are set off for Spa, heavens be praised! I must conclude, having to dress, and call both in Grosvenor and St. James's Square, in my way to St. Laurence's. I wish something may detain this little rustic until to-morrow. I wonder St. Laurence did not take his wife with him: perhaps she stays to receive this visitor. Well, if I was married (as I never shall be), I would not trust my wife out of my sight, *if I loved her*. I know too much of the advantages that are taken of a husband. There is not one amongst all the daughters of Eve that can be trusted, or that I would trust; they all love adoration, and will have it, if possible. The husband's neglect is made up for, in the attentions of other men, and then, "their stars are more in fault than they." Excuse me, Johnson waits for me to dress,

dress, and I have trifled long enough
for you to be heartily tired of my folly,
and to be happy to see the name of

DILLON.

MISS MORDAUNT

T O

THE REV. MR. MORDAUNT.

Portland Place, Dec. 29, 1785.

My dear Father

IS, no doubt, anxious to hear of my
safe arrival. I got to town rather late
last night, but I am willing to take the
pen thus early, to inform you of it, as
Lady St. Laurence is just going to
send a frank to the Vale. I found
her

her Ladyship had kindly staid at home in expectation of me. I was received with the kindest welcome, and I instantly saw the unaffected Julia Osborn in every word and action. Exaltation has not altered her in the least. My Lord is gone to Castle Howard, therefore her Ladyship was without company: only a Mr. Dillon was here, a very particular friend of my Lord's, and of the family, who indeed seemed to make a part of it, by the freedom of his manners and conversation. My dear sir, you know I am but a bad judge of the world, otherwise I would say, I did not think this man an amiable character. But this opinion of him must be erroneous, for Lord St. Laurence would not make any man his friend who was not deserving: nor would I speak my sentiments thus freely to any but my father, who has been
always

always kindly indulgent to the errors of his girl, and taught her always to speak the language of her heart. Lady St. Laurence asked me abundance of questions about the Vale; nor did she forget the poorest inhabitant of the meanest cottage. On you, my dear sir, she was lavish of her praise, saying that she owed to you many of her happiest days, and is certain that the farther she advances towards their close, she will more truly feel the debt of gratitude owing both to the best of fathers, and to you, her second father. I need not say how highly delighted I was to find this amiable woman still possessing sentiments, if I am to look on the world as I have only yet done through books, few of the great ones possess. But before I return, I shall have a clearer idea of their characters. I will not exceed the limits of a month, which

which your kind indulgence has given me to stay with my friend. Her Ladyship has just finished her letter; and she begs her compliments to you, and says you must excuse my writing short letters, for the time I have to stay she is determined shall be devoted to pleasure and amusements, and that, when I return, the relation of them will serve to enliven a dull hour by the fire side; she also begs that, in my absence, you will be very attentive to her father, who, you know, loves your society. In the spring she will come and thank you for your goodness. My dear sir, we are engaged almost every day I have to remain here, therefore I shall have but little time to spare. My kind friend has supplied me with a profusion of fashionable dresses and other little necessary appendages to dress. She is angry at you for putting yourself

yourself to any expence for my journey. "How should an old man know "the fashions?" says her Ladyship.— Tell him to mind his fields and garden. Pray remember me to all friends, and believe me most truly,

Your affectionate daughter,

MARY MORDAUNT.

L A D Y M A Y N E

T O

L A D Y S U S A N D R A Y T O N .

Grosvenor Square, Dec. 28.

I Am positively too lazy to stir abroad this morning. I wish I was any thing but

but a woman of fashion. 'Tis positively a horrid tiresome life to dress, visit, and all the little etceteras. Indeed I am almost sick of the whole world: I think the world is almost on the same terms with me. I could hardly get a male creature that would stop a moment with me last night, except to say how do you do, until I was introduced to Lady St. Laurence, who was surrounded by all the pretty fellows about town, with Dillon at their head. Positively that creature is become an idiot. He hardly took any notice of me, as you must have seen, except to introduce me to this peerless dame, from whom I received a very polite invitation to a Rout at her house tomorrow evening, given on purpose to introduce some country Miss she expects this day, and whom she has sent for to wonder at her superior splendor,

and

and retail the account, second-hand, to all the bores about her father's estate. Poor creature, how she will stare at the new order of beings she will see at this same rout! Don't you think that Dillon, who is very sly, has a design on her Ladyship? However, since he does not choose to be communicative, we must be even with him. Pray give me the character of Lord St. Laurence, as I think he was once an admirer of your Ladyship, and then I shall be able to judge how it will be possible to manage him. Sir William does not propose to leave the country until some time in the next month, therefore I shall have some respite. It is really horrid to be chained down to the society of a man one despises. The reason why I married, was that I might be my own mistress, and in possession of a good fortune: for to speak truth, Sir

William

William does not attempt—for an attempt it only would be—to restrain my expences. He made me an excellent jointure, and a very handsome allowance for pin-money. He married me because, just at that time, he saw no one he liked better, and I was a celebrated beauty: his father was just dead, he had without any trouble taken possession of a *good estate*; and a *wife* was necessary to complete his *suite*. These being all the reasons why we came together, you will not wonder why we are not now very cordial. For had I been any other than a woman who was the admiration of every other man, Sir William would never have married me: and had he not been in possession of an excellent fortune, why he might have taken his dairy-maid for Charlotte Graham. Let me know by the servant whether you intend going
to

to the Duchess of Leiceſter's this evening. If you do, I may endeavour to ſhake off my lazy fit, and meet you. Pray when did you ſee Mr. Maynard? he was given to you as an intended huſband, by ſome of the party at the Pantheon. I have given you, to be ſure, no very promiſing idea of conjugal felicity; the men are ſuch ſtrange mortals, that to be well with the world is all one ought to attempt, and I don't know if I ſhall take any great pains about that.

Adieu.

C. MAYNE.

LADY SUSAN DRAYTON

TO

LADY CHARLOTTE MAYNE.

St. James's Square, Decr. 19, 1783.

AN excellent delineation of modern matrimony indeed, Lady Charlotte, and I really believe if half the married women within our circle would be as candid, the picture would be acknowledged to be true, and they would all of them own that it was just on such terms that they entered into wedlock.

Now to answer your first request, as to the disposition of Lord St. Laurence. From what I have observed, he is rather grave than gay, and has a kind of reserve belonging to him which is

is the result of habit rather than pride, of which, however, he has a competent share. Having been brought up in a stiff, ceremonious family, he has been taught to expect attention, but is also careful to pay it to every person. He is nice, to a fault, in the manners of women. I believe I lost him by some little levity that no one else but himself would have deemed such. With the smallest shadow of reason for suspicion, he might be wrought up to insufferable jealousy; he is, therefore, excellently adapted to our purpose. For

“Trifles, light as air,
“Are to the jealous, confirmation strong
“As proofs of holy writ.”

His manners are those of a man of high breeding, and his person is of the middle size, not inelegant, or ungraceful.—The *tout ensemble* is tolerably well.

Now to your question about Maynard: To be sure the creature has paid me some attention. I understand also *he has a good estate*, therefore I will own I am in doubt whether I shall take him or no: if I do, it will be upon the *Mayne plan*. An addition to my finances will be very necessary at present, for really a woman who likes play so immoderately as I do, ought to have a good rent roll in view, as a resource to supply the card purse. I am, greatly against my will, obliged to be an oeconomist in my family expences, to supply my other extravagancies. Besides this motive of oeconomy, I have twice before been on the point of marriage, and must therefore fix soon, or determine to go under the horrible, antiquated denomination of an old maid. O detestable!—and then my fortune of Thirty Thousand Pounds is not any great

great object in these glorious days of dissipation. So I must not be too nice.

You suppose me to have observed that you was hardly taken any notice of last night! No indeed I did not, as I was just in the same predicament. I was dying with mortification, and took great pains to conceal it, that the wretches might not triumph.

The first time we meet St. Laurence in company, as he does not know you, I will unobserved point him out. Take an opportunity to stand within his hearing. Mention her Ladyship's name, which will be sufficient to chain him to your elbow. Say to whomsoever you are talking, that Lady St. Laurence is a charming woman, but has too much levity in her deportment abroad; that the young men are delighted

lighted with her, and have expressed great hopes from this disposition in her : and that if you could possibly manage the matter with any degree of delicacy, you would hint it to her ; but that your slight acquaintance does not authorize you to take so great a liberty—yet it is a pity but she should know the construction that is put on her behaviour abroad. My life for it, he will court an intimacy with you, and advise her Ladyship to do so too ; and there is nothing so easy as to keep the flame of jealousy constantly burning, until we have a good opportunity to kindle it into a blaze.

I believe I shall look in at the Duchess's, but I have two or three other engagements ;—however, you ought to go, as there will be a great deal of play, and we shall not fear an eclipse,

eclipse, as the reigning toast does not visit there. Farewell, my dear Lady, let us meet in the evening, if possible, till when, I am

Yours,

SUSAN DRAYTON.

LORD ST. LAURENCE

TO

JOHN VILLARS, ESQ.

Portland Place, Jan. 2, 1786.

DO not upbraid me, my good friend, for my long silence. I acquainted you in my last of events whereon I had built all my future hopes of happiness.

C 4

Wrapt

Wrapt up in the security of self approbation, I sunk into a delirium of happiness, from which I am hardly yet awake. This, I foolishly hoped, would last for life. Vain idea! This world is not to be a scene of continued felicity, else I, who had the fairest prospects, could not have missed experiencing it. But why do I incoherently pour forth invectives against the world, and not let my friend know the cause of my disquietude? I married a young, a beautiful, a virtuous, and an amiable woman, who had passed the earlier part of her youth undebauched by a boarding-school, or a French governess. She had been educated by the clergyman who lives on Mr. Osborn's estate, under the inspection and direction of her father. She possessed good sense, and a mind unadulterated by fashion. Her sister (who had the forming of her manners)

manners) was five years older than herself, and has been married about as long, to Sir George Egerton. She makes the most amiable and best wife possible for man to be blessed with. Had I not some reason to hope, with such a foundation, for many years of uninterrupted repose? How then, my dear John, will you be surprised when I tell you that last night I happened to drop in at a rout, where I had scarcely paid my respects to my friends than I overheard a lady mention Lady St. Laurence. I own I played the part of a listener, in expectation to hear that the woman I had made choice of was happy enough to receive the approbation of her own sex. Judge my disappointment, when I heard this lady admire the beauties of her person, at the same time deplore her want of prudence; for it seems, though but just

entered into fashionable life, she has already adopted a sufficient number of its follies to make herself conspicuous. This lady, whom I afterwards found to be the wife of our old friend, Sir William Mayne, spoke with such sincerity and feeling, that I was in raptures with her, though she gave me the most unwelcome news that ever reached my ears. I shall, if possible, endeavour to get this lady to speak to Lady St. Laurence on the subject of her imprudencies, as I think they may result from a natural gaiety of disposition, and her not having been used to so much admiration. Be it from what cause it may, I am alarmed, as it is a growing evil, and is best checked before it reaches to any degree of height. I cannot even hint to her that I disapprove of her levity, for really, to speak truth, I have never seen her behave but with unaffected

ease

ease and modesty. But had this not been the case, I have too proud a heart to tell her I have any fear of losing her affections. Were such alienation ever to come to pass, even though she did not brand my name with dishonour and infamy,—we part.—

I left this company in a condition quite new to me. My mind was in a state of anarchy and confusion. I went home directly, inquired for my wife, who I found was engaged at piquet with her friend Miss Mordaunt, the clergyman's daughter, who had a great share in her education, and who is now on a visit to us. I went up stairs, and sat down by the fire in a musing disposition. Julia asked me, was I not well? and if she should ring for any thing for me? I answered No, in a tone rather harsh, I believe, though not

designedly, which made her rise from her cards and come to me, her eyes glistening with tears, to know if she had offended me. This roused me from my meditation. I kissed her hand, and said I begged her pardon if my inattention had alarmed her, but that my head ached, and that I wished to go to rest early. She rang immediately for supper. In the mean time, her behaviour was so truly affectionate, I forgot all I had heard, and recovered my spirits. We spent the rest of the evening in perfect good humour.

Since this hint of her levity, I have cautiously observed her conduct, and indeed have found it not exactly suited to my notions of female decorum; but this morning I waited on Lady Mayne, and requested her to dine with us to-morrow, which she promised.

mised. I hope, as she knows the opinion of the world about my Lady, that she will endeavour to hint this to her. I could not mention that I had overheard the subject of her discourse the other evening, but as she certainly seems to be a feeling, amiable woman, I don't doubt but she will embrace the first opportunity of insinuating such seasonable hints and observations as may supply proper advice.

Let me hear from you soon, and what you are doing abroad. I wish you would come home. Surely, though your fortune is rather scanty, you might, without "Servility," (as I have often heard you say this was impossible) live amongst your friends, or, if not, you might accept what I offered to procure for you before; and you might, by this acceptance, help to take

take off the odium of venality from Placemen—With what justice this is imputed to them, I will not venture to affirm. You, I am sure, would never incur an imputation of this kind, were you in power. As your rectitude of heart and conduct was the first bond of my friendship for you, so it will be the means of its continuance as long as we both exist.

I am, most sincerely,

Your friend,

ST. LAURENCE.

JOHN

JOHN GREY

THOMAS JOHNSON.

My Dearist frind

I NEVER wes mor gled in al my lif as
 as I was to heree you ar married, and I
 hopes to god yr wiffe will be in towne
 befor Ledy Dretons made gis us a rout,
 hir Ledy is going to the country for a
 da or too, and sure anof welle hev fin
 doing, shee desird me to aske Mr
 Dilon, for we all ar called youe no by
 our Ladis and Masters neames, and
 you mus bringe too Botels of red Wind,
 Ledy St. Laurence brings too of Bran-
 dy, and my Lord too of Rum, and to
 be fur Mr Greville will bring too
 pounce of Sugur, and a duzen of La-
 mons,

mons, the Hon Mr Maynerd is to bringe a Goos and Apel Saufe, and the Hon Mis Maynerd wil bringe a cold foul, and the Marquis is to bring frenche Pasties, and a Defart along wee him, wee ar to sit in the Drawinge rome, Lord it wil be god fun, por Ledy Dreyton cold not be at axpense of it al so al helpe a letil, do come in tim if posable. My Marster dosent kep House or id get enof, Dam al the Clobs tha nevar din at hom for sum on em. I hev a god minde to ax the questione to Ledy Dreyton myself onli I am a letil ascard the may larn som of her Ledy tricks, I hard your mastur and mi Mastur talke as if he had knoed more than shud be of hir, the ar al a wiked set Im fur, and as to Devil tis to god for sum, fur enof

No mor at presunt
frome youre good acquaintance

JOHN GREY.

LADY MAYNEM

T O

LADY SUSAN DRAYTON.

Grosvenor Square, Jan. 2, 1786.

CONGRATULATE me, my charming friend, on the execution of your plan. It succeeded better than we could expect or hope. I took care, as you would observe, as St. Laurence did not know me, to single out a woman of approved gravity of manners, whom he did know, to whom to direct my discourse: he stood still and eagerly devoured every word I uttered—I could plainly discover his agitation. The moment I had ended my speech he went to another part of the room, where I saw him pointing out my Ladyship

ship to the Duke of Pembroke, no doubt to inquire who the Lady was who had expressed such regard for the honour of his family. I had the pleasure to see the Duke and his Lordship immediately cross the room, and I was formally introduced. He paid me a great many compliments, and said Mayne had distinguished himself by his choice. We entered into a long chat, so grave and sedate, that I have not made a party in such another since my old mother died. However, I have reason to think I acquitted myself tolerably well, as I have this morning received a visit from his Lordship, and an invitation to dine to-morrow. I shall watch Dillon and her Ladyship, and if I find him on good terms, (which the wretch contrives to make himself with almost every woman he takes any pains to follow) why then, having the confidence of my Lord, and I hope the friendship of

of

of my Lady, I will not quit them until our wishes are accomplished. Nay! Dillon shall not go without his share of punishment too, unless he joins with us, and has no profound secrets. A jealous man is the best subject in the world to work upon; you may make him see every thing in a double light; and the more you feed this passion, and encourage it, the closer he will hug to his bosom the seeming friend, who is the destroyer of his peace. Such a friend I intend to be to this unsuspecting pair. In our conversation this morning, his Lordship asked me if I went much into public; to which I answered, not much, as I was rather fond of select societies than crowded assemblies. He hoped Lady St. Laurence was numbered amongst my selection. I then struck out into violent praises of her beauty, elegance, ease,

case, and vivacity; with all of which he seemed pleased, only remarking, that she might perhaps be a little too vivacious in the eyes of the town critics. (Where must this man's eyes be, when she is directly the contrary?)——But that being very amiable, the company of my Ladyship would soon reduce her to the standard of propriety, which she had ever maintained in her own family, and he had no doubt would continue to walk up to, in the course of her better acquaintance with town manners. Yes! better acquainted with town manners I intend she shall be, if I am to be the friend and confidante of her Ladyship. I must positively decline attending your Ladyship abroad so much as usual. St. Laurence knows that you are a downright coquet, and may suspect me of not being a right preceptor, if attached too much to you;

you; therefore we will meet at each other's houses, and in the interim, our pens will supply the place of visiting. Her Ladyship did not, to speak truth, seem very cordial to me, though truly polite, at her route, the other night. That rustic, the parson's daughter, looked as if she could satirize the whole company; and by her manner, I am sure she thought us all a set of oddities. I wish she would go and make puddings and caudle in the country again. However, if the prejudice Lady St. Laurence against me, I can be even with them both, by acting the same part with my Lord against them. My spirits are rather low to-day; for do you know, my dear Lady Susan, Mayne has, by this day's post, wrote to me that I may expect the supreme felicity of his company in about ten days. I heartily hope this once he will break
his

his word; though, as I am to be grave and domestic, his presence will serve to aid our plan. Don't expire, if you should meet us taking an airing together in Hyde Park. I won't promise you this will ever happen: if it should, don't laugh at, but pity me. I have had a letter from the 'Squire's Lady at Haddington, to intreat I will, on the receipt of her letter, instantly fly into the country, and bring Sir William up to town with me, or never leave him alone again, as she has observed him to be very familiar with her maids, and hears he is so at the Hall, with his own. God help the good creature! I would send, if in my power, half the maids in London, if it would prolong his stay in the country. Her own dairy-maid hindered her from a jaunt to town, and now she is wisely projecting my instant arrival in the country

to

to detect my husband in an intrigue with his. These wives are terribly jealous of their husbands' affections.— Now I could put them all in a way to get rid of so troublesome a guest; but they are not worth my bestowing so much time upon. Call on me this evening, if possible: if not, you shall hear in the morning how my day was spent in Portland Place.—Adieu.

Yours,

E. MAYNE.

LADY

LADY ST. LAURENCE

TO

LADY CECILIA EGGERTON.

Portland Place, Jan. 12, 1786.

I RECEIVED my dear Cecilia's letter informing me of herself and family's safe arrival at Brussels. Sir George's health, I most ardently hope, will soon be restored. That I am deprived of your company, at this time, is very unlucky. Miss Mordaunt is with me, but is obliged to return home next week, and then I shall have no one to speak to, none of whom I can ask advice, or in whose society I can be happy. My Lord has recommended to me Lady Charlotte Mayne, and begs earnestly

I will

I will admit her to my friendship, as she is a woman he would recommend to me as a pattern for imitation. On the short acquaintance he has had of her, I don't believe he knows her character, for I think you told me she was gay, and very dissipated; if so, and that he does know this, his desiring me to cultivate an intimacy with her, is very strange; however, whatever he requests, I shall comply with, as much as possible. He is, or I think so, grown more thoughtful of late, and sometimes speaks harshly to me; insomuch that I have been weak enough to shed tears. Miss Mordaunt tells me it is only my imagination, and that I am too susceptible of the slightest inattention. Perhaps this is true, and I am blaming my husband where he is not deserving of it: I hope it is so, and that in my next I shall be able to

acknowledge my error. He is very
lavish in his praises of Lady Mayne:
she possesses great spirits and gaiety.
Your Julia may be too grave, and he
chooses to shew in this indirect man-
ner, the kind of behaviour he wishes
for in his own wife. I shall endea-
vour to find out if this be really the case:
if it is, though I don't like the cha-
racter of a coquer, I shall assume it in
order to retain the affection of my
Lord. This, I once persuaded myself,
would not be a difficult task. I now
recollect a letter written to me by my
father, on the day before my marriage:
he said, "It requires, after marriage,
"a more nice attention to retain the
"affections of a husband, than ever it
"did before to fix those of a lover."
I begin to believe that this is true,
though then I thought it a needless
caution. Do not be alarmed, my dear
sister,

sister, you know I am sometimes apt to be afflicted with low spirits. I don't think I have lost the good opinion of my Lord, and I shall be more cautious than ever of giving him any cause of complaint. Lady Mayne dines here to-day by my Lord's invitation. It is to be a private party: only ourselves and Mr. Dillon, who is very much with us, which I rather encourage, as he is a particular friend of my Lord's, and I have ever paid attention to his partialities, in preference to my own.

St. Laurenee has just looked in, and inquired to whom I was writing: I told him it was you, on which he desired to see the letter, which confused me a great deal, and which he observed. "Nay, Julia," said he, "if you have secrets, I am not desirous of being your confidant, unless you choose that I

D 2

"should;"

“should;” and then shut the door hastily. It was impossible to let him see what I have written. I am agitated violently by his request, and by my being obliged to refuse it, inasmuch that you must excuse me if this is concluded rather abruptly. I wish to see my Lord, in order to convince him that sisters often write and speak to each other in a manner not proper for any one else to be acquainted with; not from the impropriety of their sentiments, but that they point out faults to each other, which, by their doing so, are directly amended before they are so much as suspected of having them, by the world. My best compliments to your fair fellow traveller, and Sir George, and believe me, I am his, and

Your affectionate sister,

JULIA ST. LAURENCE.

"should," and then shut the door hastily. It was impossible to let him

THE HON. HENRY DILLON

tated violently by his request, and by my being obliged to refuse it, inasmuch

THE HON. FRANCIS GREVILLE.

Bentley Square, Jan. 14, 1786.

I AM a most lucky fellow, every thing seems as if it was contrived to aid and assist me. St. Laurence is in love with Lady Charlotte,—it must be so!—the very thing in the world I most wished. I saw it in his manner the other day, when she dined there, and by his sentimental Lordship's own invitation. Even his wife, I think, perceived it, for she was uncommonly thoughtful all the day. I am glad of it, now is my time to be watchful coming on, and I shall not fail to improve it to my own advantage. St.

D 3

Laurence,

Laurence, after dinner, asked me to go with him about a little business that could not be done in the morning: though when I came to understand it, almost any time this week would have served for it. I believe he was afraid that I should smother him: but the fellow was no sooner in the chariot than he began to extol the perfections of Lady Charlotte, and gave her some virtues that I was ignorant of her being in possession of, until that moment. However, it was not my business to convince him I did not think so well of her virtues as his good Lordship, but rather to raise his opinion of her. He talked about the discretion of her behaviour, and that as Lady St. Laurence's sister was abroad, he did not know a more proper model for imitation than her. To all which I directly gave my approbation. Our business being

being done, on which we went out, I expected that now we should return; but he proposed looking in at the Opera. I wished every public place in town buried in one general heap of ruins. I at last engaged him to return home, but found Lady Charlotte gone, of which I was heartily glad, as St. Laurence evidently seemed to be disappointed, and rather petulantly asked her Ladyship, "what had driven Lady Mayne away;" which I saw disconcerted her. She made him no answer, but left the room, and sent an apology for not appearing again, as she had a violent head-ach. The heart, not the head, I believe was the place affected, if she would own the truth. I took my leave, and went directly to Lady Susan Drayton's, to inquire of her if she was the confidante in this love-affair. She confirmed my suspicion,

glided D 4 and

and said that never man loved to that degree of infatuation. She pitied Lady St. Laurence, though I could see by her manner, that the Hyazna had as much pity in his nature as she in hers. She then said, no doubt it would be in my power to console her for the loss of her husband's affection. I would not seem to understand her, and having declared that St. Laurence was my friend, went through some of your sentimental. But it would not do, I left her, not at all convinced of my honourable intentions. She called me a sly devil, and so we parted. Now here is a *sober, sentimental man*, for you, who marries an angel, by his own account, and deserts her in half a year. Could your gay, dissipated fellow have accomplished all this in a shorter period of time? My conscience is now seated up, and to render myself agree-

able

able

able

able to the fair Julia, engrosses all my future thoughts? Therefore, don't expect me to spend much time in scribbling to you. To aid the plan, the Parson's daughter goes home to-morrow. I am to make one of a party, in order to escort her on her way home. I will call and congratulate Lady Charlotte on her conquest—she is no doubt proud of it. I shall, at the same time, upbraid her for encouraging St. Laurence, when I had vowed fidelity at her shrine. By this means, too, I shall be free from any farther attendance there, and wear the willow with becoming fortitude. I shall, by and bye, become a perfect Machiavel.

I am just swarmed on by Mrs. Johnson, my valet's wife, whom you refused. I made the fellow marry her, and brought

her to town in my chaise; since which time she very often calls to thank me for my kindness to her husband, and for my kindness to herself. I never let her go without adding to the obligation. So excuse me, Frank. You are a Stoic, you know.

Yours,

DILLON.

MISS MORDAUNT

To

THE REV. MR. MORDAUNT.

Portland Place, Jan. 14.

I SHALL return on Thursday next to the country with more pleasure than I thought

thought I should, on my leaving it. I have seen the gaieties of fashionable life, but they have left no impression on my mind, nor any desire to continue in them. True happiness does not attend on any of these great folks, I am sure. They all look, when met together, like so many people who are studious to represent what they are the farthest from, in reality, and the smile on the countenance is often, I believe, the cover to an aching heart. I would not give you pain, my dear sir, but I am obliged to say, our Julia is not an exception; she too is fashionable in this. You will, doubtless, be surprised when I tell you that Lord St. Laurence, I fear, no longer loves this amiable woman, but has transferred his affections to another, and that the wife of his friend. This I believe to be true. Poor Lady St. Laurence came to my cham-

her yesterday evening, in tears, and told me that happiness was forever fled from her bosom. It was too plain that she had lost her husband's affections, and that Lady Mayne was now the object of his regard, as he had just been chiding her for having driven her away. I endeavoured to persuade her, though without effect, of the contrary. I advised her not to see this change in her Lord's temper (if there was any change), but to double her assiduities to please him. She promised her endeavour for this purpose, and exacted a promise from me in my turn, that when I returned home, neither of us should hint her uneasiness to her father, as she said she was sure I would mention it to you. Perhaps my Lord may see the impropriety and injustice of his conduct, and return before it be too late, from what he must hate

hate himself for afterwards. I am extremely unhappy indeed. I with Lady Eggerton was at home, as there is no one who can speak to my Lord on such a point, with propriety, (should he persist) but Mr. Osborn or Sir George, Lady St. Laurence, with Miss Osmond, an acquaintance of hers, and Mr. Dillon, (whom I mentioned in my first letter) are to see me on my way, about twenty miles. I hope to find you, my dear sir, in health, and to give you an account of my observations on London, and on the people I have mixed with, whom I do not much like, and whom you will like still less. I am going to attend her Ladyship to the Opera this evening, and to take a farewell of this place of public diversion, whither more people go for fashion than entertainment; except a favourite singer is on the stage, or a

new ballet, very few can tell you the name of either the opera or the dance. It is merely a visiting room, on a large scale, where the company form themselves into select parties, and the gentlemen walk from one to another, through the house, the whole evening. When the opera is over, they all meet together in one very large room, which is called the coffee-room, and in the course of waiting for their carriages, talk scandal and politics, and make parties for the ensuing night. Therefore you may judge the performance not to be very interesting. Nay, some of the company spend half their time in this coffee-room, during the dances. The divine, the adorable, the enchanting Mara, is the only one worth speaking about, and the other parts of the opera might be performed by puppets as well as any thing else. You,

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my

my dear sir, will not be entertained with such nonsense; therefore accept my attempt only as a proof how much I wish to convince you that I shall return with great pleasure to the Vicarage, until which time I remain

Your affectionate daughter,

MARY MORDAUNT.

LORD ST. LAURENCE

T O,

THE REV. MR. MORDAUNT.

Portland Place, Jan. 18.

I HOPE, my good sir, you will not be displeased at my not answering yours sooner, which at once displayed the excellence of your head and heart.

And

And most truly sorry I am not to be able at present to shew you how much attention I have given to the judicious remarks you make between a town and country life. I myself think it strange that these should be so much as brought into competition. But this is an artificial age, where folly and vice go hand in hand, and taint sooner or later, even the most spotless innocence. I would with pleasure adopt your idea of residing in the country entirely; but, you know, I have a father who is ambitious that I should attend the Court, and endeavour to distinguish myself in the senate. Neither of these objects are my own choice; yet, could I think myself likely to serve my prince, or my country, my life, my fortune, and abilities, if worth attention from either, should be at their service.

I am

I am most truly sorry to hear of Mr. Osborn's declining health, as also is your pupil, Lady St. Laurence, who keeps hers pretty well, considering the dissipation of a town, compared with the sweet tranquillity of Laurel Vale. We both return our thanks to you for the company of your amiable daughter, and are only sorry that her attendance on the duties of a daughter should render her stay with us impossible at this time; but we hope that, at another, you and your sister Mrs. Mor-daunt will spare her for a longer space. I wrote last night to Mr. Osborn, and Lady St. Laurence is now writing. I will not therefore trouble you with any message to the Vale, but expect to hear from you whenever time allows.

I am, sir, with the most perfect esteem,

Yours,

ST. LAURENCE.

THOMAS JOHNSON

JOHN GREY.

I AM sorrey i cold not except youre
 perlige invetacion but mi Maftar hes
 so meny fair's of galantry as he cals
 em that i am bify alwayse, i wod heve
 u to brek youre minde to missis fostor
 as i am fartain u wil lick matrimoni
 i nevir did so wel at mi lif as sin I wer
 marid, al the gentelmen congratulate
 me on fuche a delectate degage manur
 mi wif hes and a dele of larnin they
 seys she is a Fenix She is too moddist
 and is shamed wen they coms to se
 hir, mi Master seys I must dinny him
 to everey bodi wen she coms to se him
 now

now hes too god i is ashamd to fend
 fin Lords away wen i noes it is no
 better bodi then mi Wif we him. She
 enter tains him for mor then an nour
 we talkin aboute countrey, wonce she
 wer taken bad an mi master tooke hir
 to his owne room an was kind to hir,
 i was for heven her hom but he bid
 me not introod as she was dillirius, an
 sent me to his doctores a matter too
 mils of, i run licke a lampe liter, but
 afore I cam backe she wes acovered an
 dident ned the doctore, i hev ben de-
 straxted for fere she shud elapse as i
 noes fits ar not so esey to get rid of, and
 I shud be reched to lose her fin she is
 made so mucche on by her betterers, it
 wod giv me unspekable plesure to here
 u hed such a Wif This is all at presunt
 from your best

frinde

THOMAS JOHNSON.

THE HON. FRANCIS GREVILLE

THE HON. HENRY DILLON.

St. James's Place, Jan. 23.

Dear Harry,

I must own your last letter surprised me, although I did not think it possible for you to communicate any intelligence that would. Lord St. Laurence's affections transferred from so much innocence and beauty, to so much vice and affectation! Either he must have taken leave of his senses, or you of yours: If the former, pray how do you propose to be benefitted by his folly? Pray how is it possible, let me ask you, for even impudence, such as you possess, to make an attempt on a married woman,

woman, of apparent virtue? What now could you say to a legitimate Duchess? I beg your answer to this question. I am at a loss to conjecture what it could be. It astonishes me how you fellows dare to attempt women of high birth, as you all do, and even make your boast in public companies of the favours of ladies who ought to set the lower orders an example of virtue and conjugal fidelity. I hope, for their sakes, that you are mere boasters. You asked me, "could a gay, dissipated fellow, have accomplished all this in a shorter period of time?" No! I think not. But you also say, "It was not your business to convince him that you had not so good an opinion of Lady Mayne as his Lordship."—I think it was; and that you would then have well deserved the name of a friend. But this is not your plan.

plan. To *seem*, not to *be*, is the present fashion, which I will never adopt. I shall not stay long in town, as some papers I have found of my father's, have given me great uneasiness. I intend to go abroad, and try to dissipate it; as that is now my only resource. If you have any friend in Paris to whom you wish to write, do so, and I will faithfully execute your commissions. I shall expect you to give me a line frequently, whilst on the continent. Your volatility will serve to act as an antidote against my melancholy. I am tired of the world, and heartily wish myself out of it. My brother is in a very fair way soon to quit it, as a consumption is growing very fast upon him. He stays at Belville-Hall some time, for the air, and to settle some accounts. But he has got a party there who will not let him receive
benefit

benefit by any thing; for, when not
in the field, they are continually at the
bottle. I wish you would contrive to
spend a day with me before I set out,
which will not be till the middle of
next week. Signify your pleasure,
and I will be disengaged. Adieu.

Yours,

F. GREVILLE.

THE HON. HENRY DILLON

TO

THE HON. FRANCIS GREVILLE.

“**W**HAT now could you say to a
“*legitimate Duchess?*” That, I think,
was your question, which was, no
doubt,

doubt, to puzzle me most dreadfully. Now I'll answer it in one word—Nothing—by *deeds*, not *words*, would I proceed,—she herself could not act otherwise. “Eyes can speak, and tell the lover what the tongue dares not impart.” And by them I judge; they are my oracles.—Retaliation, (should the husband be suspected of infidelity) is of wonderful use. A verbal eclaircissement is foolish, and impracticable, with a married woman. That man deserves to meet a repulse who ventures it—I never will,—silence and secrecy for me. I have not only heard, but *proved*, (which is worth all the hearing in the world) that women are won by neglect. Their revenge joins their love to fight against themselves, and never fails.—I think I have said enough, touching the art of intrigue, to convince you that I am become

become a perfect master of it. You are stupid, and will never need a *lesson*, or by my soul, to shew you my generosity; you should have it *gratis*. What is it that always inspires you with the spirit of rambling so much? It cannot be a bad conscience. With the god of love, and his roseate wings, you will have nothing to do: therefore, I am lost in conjecture. I mortally hate your impenetrable secret, so keep it to yourself for Harry. However, I am sorry we are to lose you so soon; but as you are a rove, I shall expect to hear of your re-embarkation the next post after I have the news of your landing. I hope you will be recalled by the title of *Francis Earl of Belville*. I hate a lot, and that the present Earl is one, you cannot deny.

Dine together (whilst you are Frank
VOL. II. E. Greville)

Greville) we will, unless the *old gentleman* gets hold of your brother to-night, as I will be disengaged to-morrow, and expect you by five o'clock to take your soup with me.—Here is a long letter, and not a word of my angelic Julia. She appears in high spirits, and is seen almost every where these three or four days past. The divine spirit of retaliation, I hope, has inspired her,—if so, the prize is my own.—This last idea so delights me that I will not write a sentence more. Adieu.

Yours,

DILLON.

LADY

LADY ST. LAURENCE

TO

MISS MORDAUNT

Portland Place, Feb. 3.

I HOPE that before you receive this, you are arrived at the Vicarage in perfect health, which I shall never again enjoy; for where the mind is ill at ease, the health of the body cannot be perfect.

I wander in a maze of doubt and uncertainty, and am not now what I seem. You, my dear Mary, would not know me. I am a gay, giddy, thoughtless—to all appearance—coquet. And all this, to retain what I have a right to expect by a strict attention to

sincerity and truth, my Lord's affections. What can be his reason for admiring Lady Mayne, but her volatile, gay manners? I would ask him for what he thinks her so worthy my imitation; but a something withholds my tongue whenever I attempt to speak on that subject. There is another circumstance which gives me very great uneasiness. You know Mr. Dillon. I think within these few days, since you left us, his behaviour is as greatly altered as my Lord's. I cannot describe the manner of it, but it is not guarded by that delicacy I could wish, — Nay, he went so far as to hint, after observing that Lady Mayne had charms, and was a fine woman, that he wondered at St. Laurence, who had every grace and charm united in me! Then kissing my hand and sighing, he wished himself possessed of such a treasure.

I told

I told him that I had no reason to complain of my Lord's inattention, though, at the same time, my tongue spoke in contradiction to my heart.— Good heavens! how publicly must St. Laurence shew his attachment to this woman, when his friends dare to speak of it to me? I will never, however, reproach him. Nay, I will act the hypocrite so far, as to shew particular attention to Lady Mayne. How have I deserved to be treated thus? Would I had never seen the splendid misery of a Court, but had been destined to move in a more humble, but a much happier sphere, in the silent shades of a country life!

I was yesterday dressed to attend Lady Mayne to the Duchess of Grin-
fley's route, when my Lord came into the drawing-room, and asked me where

I was going—with a frown, I think ; but the moment I told him with whom, his countenance brightened up, and he said he would look in, and that I was dressed at all points for conquest. I answered that mine, I hoped, was made, and that to retain this was my constant study. That is a difficult matter in this gay city, Julia, said he, where there is such ample roving-room. However, I believe *you* are in no danger. I hope not, said I, for my misery would exceed all bounds, should that period ever arrive. Lady Mayne was announced, and away we went. I had not been arrived at the Duchess's a moment before Mr. Dillon joined us. Lady Mayne very sarcastically said, "Oh here is your "Ladyship's shadow !" He answered, "Where the sun shines in its meridian "lustre, shadows will always be seen."

After

After Mr. Dillon went to another part of the room, she said, he was a handsome devil: but that he was grown strangely dull of late; for that he lived only in my Ladyship's presence, and that positively I should have an army of women who would pull caps with me for him. I answered her very seriously, that I never could receive any attentions from Mr. Dillon but those of common politeness, and that I did not doubt, but as the friend of my Lord, he would never treat me otherwise than with respect; but that her Ladyship was pleased to joke, and I would forgive her. My Lord joined us and Lady Mayne, and he sat down with a party to cards. As I never play, I walked about, and was joined by Lady Susan Drayton and Mr. Dillon, who never left me whilst I staid. I endeavoured to be gay. My Lord

came after his card party was broke up, and also joined us with Lady Mayne, who soon took leave of us; after which we went home also. My Lord was silent almost all the whole way. He took notice of the uncommon flow of spirits I had been in all the evening. I shall go for a few days to the Retreat. I have need of every aid from the air to help to support my spirits. I cannot tamely sit down with content, and view the indifference of my husband. My Lord goes to visit a friend in the country, who is ill, for a few days; therefore, my being from town, will not subject me to the visits of Lady Mayne, whom I detest: or those of Mr. Dillon, who now is become too pointed in his attentions to me. Pray, my dear Mary, be cautious that no hint escape you to my father. How would it grieve him
to

to find the dreadful change in his Julia's prospects of happiness! Hope, aerial as it is, is more substantial than the attainment of our wishes—this still buoys me up with the idea of regaining, what I fear even to think I have lost. It is extremely unfortunate that my sister should, at this time, be separated from me by seas, and you at so great a distance. Give me, however, all the advice and consolation in your power. Direct your next to the Retreat, as I shall stay near a week there, and wait the coming of the post with impatience. — May you, my amiable friend, if ever you change your situation, never feel a pang equal to that which, at the present moment, rends the heart of

Your

JULIA ST. LAURENCE.

LORD ST. LAURENCE!

TO

JOHN VILLARS, ESQ.

Portland Place, Feb. 22.

INTO your friendly bosom I can pour my complaints, without fear of being exposed. I have every day more and more reason for my uneasiness. What Lady Mayne said of Julia is strictly just. There is a levity in her conduct abroad, which grows every day to a greater height. I have observed her well; though I must own my partiality would not have seen her indiscretions in so glaring colours had they not been pointed out to me. Lady Mayne delicately hinted that Mr. Dillon was very frequent in his visits, and that

that it was not right in me to encourage a young man (though once my particular friend) whose character was so well known to be that of a rake,—indeed avowedly so in all his words and actions. The ill-natured world, she said, was ever ready to circulate scandal to the prejudice of the best, and even the most amiable women: she doubted not, after all, Lady St. Laurence's prudence or virtue. She begged a thousand pardons for the hint she had given me, but she had conceived a very particular affection for Julia, and would have her manners as irreproachable as her mind was innocent.—So would I, but I greatly fear that the loose behaviour of the world has corrupted her heart, which, I firmly believe, before she entered into this vile London, was the seat of every amiable virtue. She is hardly ever at home,

and when she is, wholly taken up in dressing, and adorning her person. Every thing like domestic enjoyment, which, when I married, I hoped to experience, is entirely fled. I go to the country to see our old friend Arden, who is dying, and has expressed a desire of seeing me to-morrow. Lady St. Laurence also goes, by her own desire, to a little place I have bought for her, and which she has named the *Retreat*, of which I am very glad. I shall make my stay with Arden as short as possible, and join her. If I could once more inspire her with a relish for the country, of which she used to be lavish of her praise, I would yet expect to wean her from these follies; for she seems at times affectionate, and is truly amiable when she can forget the dissipation into which she plunged herself. Her sister, too, will soon return. I

have

have once or twice been on the point of writing to Lady Eggerton, and requesting her to remonstrate with Julia; but on reflection, I have declined it, as I would have her actions proceed from the impulse of her own heart, and not from the directions of another. So, be it as it may, Lady St. Laurence herself shall determine my future happiness or misery. Your last letter was most truly friendly, and I thank you for it. But I hope yet to bring you to Old England again, and will try what is to be done for you, as soon as my own heart is at ease, and out of suspense; for whilst I am in this agitation of mind, I can think of nothing but the object of its perturbation. Dillon, I know, is not a proper person to live much with a young woman. His principles are loose, I well know; but my pride would never let me hint to
this

this man that I feared him, or, by a coolness, to let him suspect it. No! Lady St. Laurence (if she possesses such principles as I thought she did, when I united myself to her) will not deviate long from true propriety of conduct. If she does not possess any of these virtues, what care I whom she prefers to me; or by whom I am rendered wretched? At present, I am on the rack of suspense, and cannot long remain in such a state. I shall write again soon, for only from you do I expect any consolation.

Yours truly,

ST. LAURENCE.

LADY

LADY MAYNE

TO

LADY SUSAN DRAYTON.

Grosvenor Square, Feb. 23.

ST. LAURENCE is kindling fast into a flame—I think I have fixed him. Dillon certainly loves her Ladyship. Now I cannot, with all my penetration, perceive whether her Ladyship likes him or no; for she is pretty equal as far as I can see. If she were but sometimes shy, and sometimes the contrary, why one might guess. I hate your pieces of still-life that are formed of equal elements. However, such she appears to be, and Dillon tells me that she is jealous of me. I did not think her capable of feeling any thing.

thing. However, I am heartily glad of this, and I will endeavour to inflame her suspicions; for her Lord, good soul! looks to me as to an oracle, and is always particularly attentive to me. I don't know, when she is out of the way, but I may think him worth my while to flirt a little with; but there is time enough to talk about this.—A thought has just struck me, and a brilliant one, I think. The *newspapers*, those dear, delightful retailers of scandal and politics, would not they assist us? I'll tell you how: a few paragraphical hints serve to let the world know what is going on, and then, when the great denouement comes, every one says, "Aye, we have expected this a long time: it is no wonder; don't you remember our paper said, a month or two ago, that such and such things were going on?"

And

And then, they are not too curious in searching out facts to prove any one's *innocence*. As if the story comes too suddenly, one is apt to cry, "Lord, it cannot be true. Pray how was it? do tell me all about it." St. Laurence is going this morning to visit a sick friend in the country; her Ladyship, by way of decorum I suppose, is going to the *Retreat*. Now, cannot we, by the means of Sparkle, the editor, get the following paragraph inserted to-morrow.

"Yesterday noon set off for the country, on a visit to a friend, a certain Nobleman, not an hundred miles from Portland Place; and the same day his Lady set out also for her villa, near Windsor. The country being dull at this season, she was followed by the Hon. Mr. D*****,

" well

“well known in the annals of gal-
 “lantry; and no doubt but he will be
 “able to entertain her Ladyship until
 “the return of her Lord.”

This will have no bad effect, I think, and a plan I have formed for the ensuing Masquerade, will complete the business. We shall have our revenge on this rival beauty, and on Dillon too, who will not dare to reveal our plot, after he knows it, as by its effects, the laugh would be horridly against him. Manage men by their vanity, and on my conscience, you may lead them any where. They have their weak sides as well as we. Let me have your answer as soon as possible, as I am so pleased with the scheme I have formed, that I shall immediately put it in execution. If you approve it, and can suggest any improvement,

provement, let me know, and I will adopt it. I fear lest Lady Eggerton should come home before we can accomplish our design. St. Laurence is the most credulous fool I ever knew. You may make him believe any thing. Pray how does your match go on? I have not heard a word of it lately. I hope it is not off the tapis—

I expect Sir William in town very soon, but am not very anxious to know when. The 'Squire's Lady will never favour me with another epistle, I fear. Let me hear soon, and you will oblige

Yours,

CHARLOTTE MAYNE.

LADY

LADY CECILIA EGGERTON

T O

LADY ST. LAURENCE.

Spa, February, 29.

YOUR last letter, my dear Julia, very sensibly afflicts me, and I most truly lament my absence from London at this time. I am at a loss to guess your Lord's motives for wishing you to associate with Lady Mayne. Her character he cannot be acquainted with, you may be certain; for she is not only dissipated, but, in my opinion, dissolute. You would be right in complying with the request of your husband, in most instances; but where the request is founded in his forming a wrong opinion of any object, you ought

ought to convince him of his error; and then I am certain you both would think alike on this subject. For as to your idea of having lost his affection, you must excuse me, Julia, if I say, you are acting an improper part as a wife, when you accuse your husband of any design of infidelity, because he sometimes either looks or speaks harshly. I do not doubt but Miss Mordaunt is right in saying it is only your imagination. You, my dear, have a heart I well know, replete with too great a share of sensibility. This certainly, is a misfortune, as it renders our lives miserable. With only a common share of feeling, many occurrences would give pleasure, which too great sensibility refines into objects of misery. Never quit your own character to assume that of another; especially one you dislike: and did your Lord thoroughly

roughly know Lady Mayne, he would hate her too. If I am not greatly mistaken in Lord St. Laurence's character, it is not a dissipated wife he wishes for; therefore, be yourself, act with propriety, and do not endeavour to scheme yourself into sorrow. I shall return in about three weeks, when I hope, that all these idle chimeras will be thrown aside, and that you will own the justness of my reasoning. If not, I shall speak to Lord St. Laurence, and inquire what is the cause of your uneasiness, adding that it is a pity that any pain should exist, where nothing worthy of punishment preceded.

That he did, and that he does, love you, I have not the least doubt. Men's tempers, as well as our own, are not always alike, and if we appear discomposed to each other, we are not

always to look to ourselves, but the world, as the cause. I am sorry you did not shew your last letter to me, when requested to do so by your Lord. For that would have brought on an eclaireissement which would have set your heart at rest. This will have taken place, I hope, before this meets your eye; otherwise your sister will be very wretched. Sir George says you are a little spoiled child, and deserve — I will not say what. You did not mention our father in your last; but I have a letter from him, with a very bad account of his health. If he complains, it must be very bad indeed; he wishes much for our return; therefore, on his account, as well as yours, we shall hasten it. Sir George has received great benefit from the waters, as also the fair Eliza; but I cannot erase the melancholy which has taken

taken possession of her mind; nor do I wonder at it. The grand restorer, Time, may effect this wished-for change. She goes abroad sometimes with me to church, or accompanies me in an airing, and intends to return to England with us. I have not yet been able to get a sight of the picture she wears, though she has promised me I shall see it: but on condition that I never hint the name to any one, should I, on seeing the face, know it. All this I have promised, but most truly hope not to recognize any acquaintance in the features. Give me a line on the receipt of this, if only two words, to signify that you are well, and happy as

Your affectionate sister,

CECILIA EGGERTON.

THE

THE HON. HENRY DILLON

TO

THE HON. FRANCIS GREVILLE.

Berkley Square, Feb. 25.

A CURSE light on all women!—Envious ones I mean. For with some of them originates the cause of my present chagrin.—But to proceed. St. Laurence having gone to the country, her Ladyship also set out for the *Retreat*, alone. I thought my time would be spent to some advantage if I followed her, as a *tete a tete* was what I wished. I took my horse yesterday morning and rode to the *Retreat*, where I found her Ladyship in an elegant dishabille, as she did not expect company. She

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looked

looked rather embarrassed on my entrance; however, afterwards we entered into chat, and I pretended not to know St. Laurence was not with her Ladyship. She assured me he was in a different part of the country, being gone to visit a sick friend. I smiled at this intelligence. She observed this, and asked me what was my meaning in doing so? I said, had I such a wife, all my friends might die before I would waste a day in visiting them. I added that I heard he was at Lady Mayne's route the night before last; but as her Ladyship now told me he set off for the country on that morning, it must have been impossible. She changed countenance on this, and became thoughtful. I hoped that what I had said concerning my Lord, had not affected her; as I would rather die than cause
a mo-

a moment's uneasiness to her; that the town was very censorious, and idle tales should not be believed. Greville! she burst into a flood of tears, and said that she was a truly wretched woman, and not in the least deserving of the fate she experienced. Here was a time to endeavour to comfort her,—I did so, but met with a repulse, and an order from her to quit the house. I did not mind this, as they all pretend to make some resistance, in order to heighten the favour, when it is granted. I then went into some of your heroics, threw myself at her feet, vowed never to rise until I heard her pronounce my pardon, attributed my presumption to what could not fail to procure my excuse—the excess of her charms,—promised never to offend again: and so was forgiven. I knelt to kiss her fair

hand, on receiving my pardon, when the door opened, and in walked St. Laurence. The Day of Judgment will be a Jubilee to what I felt at that moment, and her Ladyship trembled and sunk into a chair, without power of utterance. What was I to say?—I muttered out some few words, told him my visit was meant to him, but finding him from home, I had dined with Lady St. Laurence, and was just taking my leave, in order to return to town. “It seems, Dillon,” said he, “though *you* did not know where I *was*, the newspapers” (holding one in his hand) “knew where *you was*, “as this paragraph will convince you.” I looked at it, and was more confounded than ever. “Pray give it to Lady St. Laurence,” said he, “it is fit she should see the Town is fully acquainted

“quainted with her motives for re-
 “tiring to the country.” She read the
 paper, and, by that time recovering,
 said, that her own heart acquitted her
 fully; and what was said in any new-
 paper was quite indifferent to her;
 that she hoped his Lordship had too
 good an opinion of both herself and
 Mr. Dillon, to put any wrong con-
 struction on a visit, which, whatever
 might be advanced to the contrary,
 was, in reality, a surprise to her. I
 don’t know whether he was convinced
 of my good intentions, but he looked
 devilish fullen, and a trio not being
 then agreeable, I took my leave. Now
 have not I a right to curse the female
 sex? for the malice of some of them
 had inserted this story, in order to alarm
 St. Laurence, and put his wife on her
 guard.—But how the devil any but his

infernalship himself could tell my design, I know not. I must be very circumspect in future, for St. Laurence will keep a steady eye on me. I don't totally despair; for as I was forgiven the declaration of my passion, and the dear creature endeavoured to convince her Lord that nothing but pure friendship subsisted between us, why, all may yet be well. I must go to Portland Place as usual; otherwise, it will argue guilt, which I will never allow. You are, I hope, before this time, tired of Paris, and on wing for London. I must call on Lady Mayne this morning, as no doubt she has read the scandal of the day, and is impatient until she sees me, in order to give vent to her spleen. All the women I have met this morning have a malicious smile on their countenances, and the men heartily

heartily congratulate me on my success; therefore I have already got the credit of an intrigue, which, you know, is almost the same as the reality to most of us. Let me hear from you immediately.

Yours,

DILLON.

LADY ST. LAURENCE

TO

MISS MORDAUNT.

Portland Place, Feb. 28.

My dear Mary,

I AM at this moment in the most distracting situation imaginable. You know not the distress of your Julia,

F 4

but

but will judge of it when I tell you that she herself is become an object of suspicion, and not without some reason for it, which she is afraid to clear up.—I believe I told you that I designed to go to the country, wishing for retirement. I did so, and was followed two days after by Mr. Dillon, who dared to own an improper attachment to me. Guess the resentment I must feel on such an occasion.—I ordered him to quit my house. But he begged my pardon in the most submissive manner, vowing never again to offend my delicacy. I granted it, and he, very improperly, knelt to thank me, when my Lord entered the room. How must the guilty feel in such situations, when I dared not to meet his frown, but sunk into my chair! Mr. Dillon attempted an apology, but my Lord brought with him

him a newspaper that contained a scurrilous paragraph, which served to confirm him in the opinion of my bad conduct. What could I do? I durst not tell him of the affront offered me by his friend, well knowing by what methods men of honour terminate such affairs. Could I hazard the life of my husband?—No! I rather determined to bear his unmerited reproach, (as my future conduct shall convince him I was not deserving of it) than by exposing his friend to his resentment, lead him into dangers. I shudder but to think of it; yet it is hard, very hard, Mary, that in order to keep this secret, I should hazard all hopes of happiness in future, and bear the frown of my husband undeservedly. It was strange, he said to me, how Mr. Dillon could be here, and in such a situation. The

world (however I might satisfy him of my virtue) would judge of it in a very bad light, as Mr. Dillon was a man who boasted of his conquests over women. Had I known this to have been his character, I would, doubtless, have avoided him; but, as my Lord's friend, I had no suspicion. We are now in town, but my Lord is seldom at home, and I am not much abroad; so that we do not often meet. This is a life I cannot long bear, and perhaps his suspicions of me may serve to confirm him in his regard to Lady Mayne. My woman tells me that the footmen go very often there. I had determined to speak to my Lord immediately after his return from the country, as I had just received a letter from my sister, desiring me to do so. But now to tell him I suspect his affections are placed
on

on Lady Mayne, would but offend him, if groundless, and irritate him, if true. So to Providence I must commit my future fate, and on the goodness of that I will fix a firm reliance. Write soon to

Your afflicted friend,

JULIA ST. LAURENCE.

LORD ST. LAURENCE

TO

JOHN VILLARS, ESQ.

Portland Place, Feb. 28.

THE die is cast; and I am most completely wretched. Never again let

F 6

man

man place any faith in the appearance of innocence and virtue. I shall from henceforth consider these as mere names made use of to cheat men into security, that their disappointment may be the greater, on finding their mistake.

I received your letter, advising me to be cautious, and not to suffer a mistaken jealousy to take root in my bosom. But now I am convinced, and the world too, I doubt not, will soon be convinced that my suspicions were not groundless. What think you of my entering my own house in the country, unexpectedly, and finding Dillon kneeling at the feet of my wife, when they both thought I was afar-off to visit Arden?—as indeed I should have been, had not a newspaper come into my hand, mentioning, with some dishonourable

honourable innuendos, Dillon's intention of visiting the *Retreat* in my absence. Some envious friend of Dillon has betrayed him. My wife makes an odd kind of a story, how it came about that I found him in this situation. However, I shall forbid his farther visits in Portland Place. I do not think either the rascal who would attempt to seduce, or the woman that could give encouragement to his addresses, worthy to be held in competition with my own life. Lady St. Laurence I once thought an angel, and I believe she is yet recoverable. Perhaps, Villars, after what I have told you, you will blame me for saying I shall yet endeavour to restrain her licentiousness of conduct. As I love her with the utmost tenderness, and hold her family in the highest esteem, I have determined

to try if she is not yet reclaimable. What sorrow would it occasion in them were they acquainted with her conduct! I do not believe her guilty of more than listening to his addresses. This is enough to sting a heart capable of less feeling than mine, or less pride; and were not my affection unbounded, I would spurn her from my bosom, as the contamination of the mind is the usual prelude to that of the person. I shall retire to the country as soon as the parliament is up, and not return to the town until I have made a trial to re-establish my peace of mind, which is entirely fled from me at present. It would be very friendly in you to come over to me just at this crisis. My own house is hateful to me, as I cannot enter it with my wonted cordiality, and I scorn to dissemble. Julia's situation

situation must be dreadful, for I scarcely ever see her without evident marks of sorrow on her countenance. As soon as I can dispel my own uneasiness, I shall endeavour to convince her that she has not lost all confidence with me, that she may not be discouraged from endeavouring to deserve my esteem in future. Lady Cecilia Eggerton, she informs me, will return in a few weeks, which gives me great satisfaction. My father has wrote, and so has my aunts, on the subject of the paragraph, which, I have answered them, is merely the effect of ill nature and envy. But they, I well know, will not like to find my wife has ever given room for any one's remarks on her conduct. You must excuse me, as Lady Mayne is at the door, and I must go and receive her, Lady St. Laurence being abroad.

Adieu, my only confidant,

ST. LAURENCE.

LORD ST. LAURENCE

TO

THE HON. HENRY DILLON.

Portland Place, March 1.

I DO not think any apology necessary for my desiring you to decline any farther visits at my house. You are a young man, and I once had an esteem for you, therefore I will give you this caution:—Govern your violent spirit for intrigue; at least do not again attempt to seduce the wife of your friend.

ST. LAURENCE.

WILLIAM

WILLIAM OSBORN

TO

LADY ST. LAURENCE.

Laurel Vale, March 4.

My dear Julia,

I Now write in the utmost anxiety for the happiness of my child. Of this anxiety, a newspaper which has fallen into my hands, is the occasion. The subject of the alarming paragraph points so directly at you, that it must have been taken notice of; and I make no doubt but it has caused as great uneasiness both to your Lord and yourself as it has done to your father. Write immediately, and inform me who has dared to write so dishonourably of you, as I doubt not Lord St. Laurence

rence will endeavour to find out the author, and punish him. I would myself have come up to town for this purpose, but that I am confined to my room through illness. You now see, my dear girl, how difficult it is to pass through life without censure, for I am certain you are not deserving of any, as I hope your Lord is also; and that this will only serve to render you more circumspect in your conduct. I have a letter from Cecilia, who informs me that she is well, and Sir George greatly recovered; and that she will return soon. When she does, I must make a request to your Lord that you will both come down and spend a few days at the Vale, as it may be some time before I am sufficiently recovered to make a visit to you. Cecilia and my son have promised me their company.

Mr.

Mr. Mordaunt (who is now with me, and truly interested in your happiness) begs to be remembered respectfully to your Lord, and that you will accept his warmest wishes, with mine, for a long continuance of felicity. God bless you, my dear girl.

Your affectionate father,

WILLIAM OSBORN.

LADY CECILIA EGGERTON

TO

LADY ST. LAURENCE.

Spa, March 3, 1786.

I TAKE the pen to address my dear Julia, under a very strong impression that

that felicity is again restored to her bosom; and I hope it will be in my power, in the course of this letter, to make some small addition to it, if it can admit of any addition. Sir George being greatly recovered, we have gone more abroad, and seen more company at home than has been our custom since our being here. Eliza had never joined any of our parties, but always amused herself with music or drawing, in which last accomplishment she, like you, excels. She had drawn the portrait of an exceedingly handsome youth, which I intreated her to give me: she readily consented, provided it might remain in her apartment whilst we staid here. She had likewise drawn an exact likeness of herself, which she hung by it, a circumstance which made me strongly suspect that this was a likeness

likeness of the vile monster who had betrayed her. Both Sir George and myself examined it very closely, to see if we could trace any likeness among any of our acquaintance, and were truly happy that we could not. Eliza being abroad one day, and some friends who came to pay a morning visit happening to turn the discourse on drawing, I said, I believed I had in my possession two pieces that might have been pronounced excellent, had they been produced by the hand of a master in the art, and that they were done by a lady, a friend of mine. I went up stairs and brought both the portraits, which they all admired exceedingly. They were given into the hand of a gentleman who had arrived the night before, and came with a lady, who begged he might be admitted to our parties.

He

He held them a considerable time. We were all surprised to find him tremble excessively. At length he said, "Lady Eggerton," (holding the female portrait) "may I be permitted to ask if ever you saw the original of this?" I hesitated. "Pray speak," he said, "you know not the interest I have in this question." "Yes," I then answered, "if it at all interest you, sir, I have." "Is she living?" he asked with violent emotion; "She is," said I; on which he begged me pardon for his questions, but said I would excuse them when he related his reasons, which should be done in the evening, if I would give him leave to call again, and be alone.—My curiosity would not let him quit the house, and I begged leave of the company to withdraw with him to another room; which, as soon

as we had done, he said, "Look well, my Lady, at that portrait, and then, on me; is there no resemblance?"—Surprise took such hold on me, that I was unable to speak, but instantly saw they were the same features, only that a few years had given a more manly countenance to the original. As soon as I could speak, I said, "Let me now ask a question in my turn—Are you married?" "Yes madam, to the lady whose portrait I now hold." "And to none else?" said I.—"Heavens, what a question! How is it possible I could be suspected of such villainy?"—Villainy there must have been, if you say nothing but the truth."—I then related all Eliza's story, only I did not tell him she was then in my family. He interrupted me frequently by breaking out into violent agonies of passion.

passion. At last I ended, and he said it was now in my power to make him the happiest of mortals, by directing him to the place where Eliza was then residing; but that he would first clear his own conduct, as I had most fully done that of his wife, who was now, if possible, dearer to him than ever. I had not recollected that we were sitting in Eliza's room, until the door opened, and she entered. On seeing a man with me, she instantly drew back,—he flew to the door, and caught hold of her, saying, “Eliza, look on your Greville.” She gave a scream, and fell into his arms. I blamed him for his rashness, though he was hardly in a better situation than herself. We moved her to the window, and after some time, she recovered so far as to open her eyes. She took hold of my hand, but would not look

look up. "Hide me, hide me, from
"the fight," she said, and leaned her
head on my bosom. I intreated Mr.
Greville to retire, whilst I endeavour-
ed to restore Eliza. He did so, but
said I must forgive him if he should
be importunate to be admitted again
soon. I desired him only to step into
another room, as I would by no means
desire him to quit the house until every
thing should be explained to their mu-
tual satisfaction. He then retired into
the drawing-room, where his friends
were waiting for them, and apologized
for having kept them so long. They
took their leave, and he was joined by
Sir George, whilst I was endeavouring
to convince Eliza that there had been
a mistake. She said it was cruel in
me to bring the only man on earth
she wished to avoid, into her presence.

Nor was it possible for more than an hour's conversation to convince her that he was not married to any one but herself. She asked me several times if she might believe what I told her, and whether I had not been deceived, like herself, by his relation of the story? I wished to call Mr. Greville to relate how all these mysterious circumstances had been brought about; but she declared that until she had composed herself a little, it was impossible for her to bear a second sight of him. I therefore begged her to take a little time to recollect herself, adding that I would go down and learn what she wished to know. She did so, and I went down to the drawing-room. Mr. Greville made some apologies for the trouble he gave me, but said, that by what I had told him of Eliza's story, he perceived

ceived it to be necessary to explain matters, in order to remove the imputation of being a villain. He then began as follows.

“On my leaving England, after our marriage, I went to Paris, from whence I often wrote to Eliza, and where I received her answers. At length, after writing two or three letters, without being assured of their being received by Eliza, a packet arrived from my father, informing me of his being well informed of my marriage, but that he had put it out of my power ever to see the wretch to whom I had dared to give my name, to the utter disgrace of myself and family, as she was now out of the kingdom; and that he had

"also taken care to have me con-
 "fined until I should choose to think
 "as became his son. I had hardly
 "time to finish this letter, (which had
 "nearly deprived me of all sensation)
 "when some officers of the Police en-
 "tered my apartment, with a Lettre
 "de Cachet, and conveyed me to that
 "prison of horrors, the Bastille, where
 "I remained for the space of six
 "months. I cannot say but I had
 "better treatment than I expected.
 "This was owing to my being inti-
 "mate, indeed related to the French
 "Minister. I was, at length, after
 "making some concessions to my fa-
 "ther, in order to get my liberty,
 "liberated, and allowed to go abroad
 "again. This was no sooner done
 "than I flew to England. I went to
 "Wales, whither Eliza had informed
 "me

“me her family had removed, and
“was there informed of the death of
“both her parents; that she had sold
“all their effects, and removed with
“much secrecy; that no trace was left
“behind by which it might be possible
“to discover her retreat. A gleam of
“hope yet shot across my imagination.
“—It occurred to me that it must be
“impossible that my father could have
“any hand in her removal, as she
“would not, in that case, have been
“left to wait for the sale of her effects,
“or suffered to leave the place alone
“in a post-chaise, as I was told she
“did. I hastened up to London, and
“immediately put advertisements in all
“the different newspapers, not doubt-
“ing if she was in England, but some
“one of them or other would reach
“her, and procure me an answer.

"But after repeating this for more
 "than three months, I received no
 "tidings, and gave up the pursuit, as I
 "supposed some arts must have been
 "used by the Earl of Belville, which
 "I could not penetrate. I vowed
 "never more to see my father, since
 "he had done me this irreparable in-
 "jury, and kept my word, until I was
 "sent for, some days before his death.
 "He then declared that he had used
 "no stratagem to carry away my wife,
 "but that he had heard what gave
 "him great satisfaction, that she was
 "dead. This plunged me into me-
 "lancholy, as I did not doubt of the
 "truth of what he said, as I never
 "had received any answer to all my
 "advertisements. My father dying, I
 "resolved to visit Paris once more, and
 "endeavour to recover my health and
 "spirits.

"spirits. Thither accordingly I went,
 "but I found myself still pursued by
 "the idea of Eliza. I came to this
 "place, as my health has sensibly de-
 "clined within this last month; but
 "having met with all my soul holds
 "dear, in my amiable wife, I doubt
 "not but we shall both of us be re-
 "stored not only to health, but true
 "happiness.

"It now remains for me to explain
 "how Eliza came to read an account
 "of my marriage at Paris, which is
 "this: A Mr. Greville, a cousin of
 "mine, was married at the English
 "ambassador's chapel, to Lady Anne
 "Ward, about the time you mention;
 "and they had added, by mistake, the
 "Honourable to his name, which
 "might well account for her believing

" that I had acted so vile a part, though
 " I can scarcely forgive her for har-
 " bouring such a thought. In her
 " narrative to you, she says,—That she
 " never looked in a newspaper, after
 " she removed from Wales.—Now no
 " one but herself could have understood
 " who was meant, as I had couched
 " it in terms for that purpose.

" I hope I have explained my con-
 " duct so far, as to remove any im-
 " pression that may have been made
 " on your Ladyship's, or Sir George's
 " mind. And if I have succeeded in
 " this, I hope you will assist me in
 " convincing Eliza that she ought to
 " forget every thing past, and con-
 " vince me of her unabated affection,
 " by giving me her hand publicly here,
 " at our ambassador's chapel at Brus-
 " sels,

"fals, in the presence of both our
"friends and the world."

I assured him that nothing would give me more sincere delight than to assist on so joyful an occasion; and I had no doubt but Mrs. Greville (for I now considered her as such) would comply, as soon as she had recovered her surprise. I left Sir George to entertain him, whilst I went and related what had passed, in order to convince Eliza that what I had told her was perfectly true. I found her more composed, but far from well. Her spirits could not support so violent a shock, and it was with great difficulty that I was able to keep her from fainting more than once, whilst I related to her Mr. Greville's story; which

when I had ended, she fell on my neck and burst into tears, called me her protectress and preserver, and poured a thousand blessings on me, &c. I said, Mr. Greville was below, and no doubt wished to see her, if she could bear the interview. She said she would rise, as she believed that now she was assured of his innocence, she could support herself through the scene, however affecting. After she was ready to see him, I conducted him into her room. It is not in the power of any language I am mistress of to describe their meeting. Although it was many moments before a word was spoke by either of them, Eliza was so agitated that I much feared for the consequences. I therefore prevailed on Mr. Greville (though with great reluctance) to leave her until the next morning. He spent the

the remainder of the evening with us. He talked of you. It seems he had met you, on your first arrival in town, in the course of some of your visits. He is, I think, next to your own Lord, the most amiable man I have seen. Eliza is so much recovered with in these three days (for it is so long since they met) that she would hardly be known for the same person. So you see I shall bring a bride to London with me again. All the unmarried ladies will be for paying court to me; but I shall not turn match-maker, that being a most unthankful task. On Monday next the ceremony will be performed at Brussels, and in a very short time after, I shall embrace my sister, and introduce the new-married people. You will be tired with the length of this epistle, but I

hate to be interrupted in the midst of a story; so, now it is finished, I will bid you adieu. Don't write any more, as it is uncertain how soon we may return. That you may be perfectly well and happy, is the wish of

Your affectionate sister,

CECILIA EGGERTON.

LADY MAYNE

T O

LADY SUSAN DRAYTON.

Grosvenor Square, March 5, 1786.

FATE seems to afflict the work we have begun. Could any thing ever have

have fallen out so charmingly lucky as that Dillon should actually have gone to comfort my Lady at the Retreat, and that St. Laurence should, in consequence of our scheme, find him there? All this I have learnt from Allen, her Ladyship's woman, whom I recommended in such strong terms one day before her Lord, that she was obliged to accept of her services; though I could see she did not much like it. This woman, who gives me constant accounts of what passes, says my Lord is hardly ever at home: that her Lady is always in tears: and that Mr. Dillon is forbid the house, as she overheard Lord St. Laurence telling her Lady so. This is so exactly what I wished, that I am overjoyed. I called this morning in Portland Place—St. Laurence received me with a melancholy

choly countenance. I expressed my extreme sorrow at the liberty which had been taken with the character of so amiable a woman as St. Laurence, and said I feared it had affected her Ladyship's spirits too much, as I had never seen her since that malicious report had been circulated. I advised him to take her abroad, as usual, else the world might put a wrong construction on her avoiding society. He returned me many acknowledgments for this very friendly hint, and makes a party with me to the Play, to-morrow evening. I shall take care Dillon shall know of it, who will not fail of being there, if only to vex St. Laurence. Now if I can but get them to the Masquerade next week, all will be accomplished. You must make a very great visit with me to-morrow, to no less a person

person than Dillon's valet's wife. She is also one of our tenant's daughters; the fellow saw her when his master was down with us at Haddington. This girl, I believe, was prevailed on, rather by the master than the man: for Dillon painted London in such bright and alluring colours, and promised to be so very kind to her if she would run away and marry Thomas, that Sally could not withstand the temptation. I believe she sees Dillon often, for my servant saw her at the drawing-room window with him, when he went to deliver a letter, and was told Mr. Dillon was not at home. I shall visit her, and invite her to my house. This honour will, consequently, make her talkative, and I shall hear what other visitors she has had, or where she has been. You want to know what all this

this can tend to; I'll tell you! She is just the size of Lady St. Laurence. I shall get possession of her secrets, and on condition that she does as I bid her, I shall promise not to expose her to her husband, and friends. This insures her silence; I will then dress her exactly like the fair Julia, and appoint Dillon to meet her at the Masquerade, which he will be punctual in doing. Then leave the rest to me. I will be revenged on him, and this beauty too. You must make one of our party and assist me. He has just been here in a violent passion, at being forbid St. Laurence's house. I told him the story had circulated over half the town; and that I had scarcely been in any house where it was not the general topic of discourse. He tells me he is certain he is not disagree-

able

able to Lady St. Laurence, but that now he will scarcely have an opportunity of speaking to her. I have advised him to write to her, and bribe her woman to deliver the letter. Now if he does so, I will instruct Allen to receive both his money and epistle, to keep the former for *her* services, and bring the latter to *me*, which I will take care to answer. Don't you think this project will do? You must come early to-morrow morning, as our visit will engage us for an hour or two, and I spend the afternoon in Portland Place, where, by this time, you have a card of invitation. They expect a great deal of company at this route, as it is given in consequence of my hint to my Lord. I am in great haste, therefore excuse my concluding this, in order to dress for the Theatre. Adieu.

Ever yours,

C— MAYNE.

LADY ST. LAURENCE

TO

WILLIAM OSBORN, ESQ.

Portland Place, March 8, 1786.

My dear Sir,

MOST truly am I afflicted to have been the cause of one uneasy moment to the best of fathers. Very many wretched hours have I experienced since you last pressed me to your indulgent bosom. Oh my dear father! your Julia was never formed for the situation in which she is placed. Domestic enjoyments are banished, and the frivolity of fashion substituted in its stead. But I will not give you pain by enumerating a thousand circumstances

cumstances which have been almost a continual source of disquiet to me, but which, if Lord St. Laurence had married almost any other woman, she might never have experienced. The paragraph you allude to has given a mortal stab to my future peace of mind. Circumstances that I cannot relate to you, sir, render it alarming to me. Yet do not suspect that any misconduct on my part, is the cause of my silence on this subject. I hope yet to be in the possession of the full confidence of my father, and that he will lend a cautious ear to any ill stories that may be circulated on this great field of scandal and detraction. How happy should I be were it possible for me again to sit down at the Vale, in that peaceful tranquillity of which Lord St. Laurence found me in possession, on his first visit

visit to my father. Indeed, sir, he is not the same person that he was when you first asked your Julia how she could like to spend the remainder of her days with him ; and indeed I fear our union was too precipitate ; as I think, had my Lord's heart been interested in it, his affections would not have been so variable as I have every reason to fear they must be at present. If my fears were not just, he would never be so indifferent as he seems to be, to his domestic happiness. I have used, and still use, the utmost caution and attention, in order to fulfil the duties of an affectionate wife ; though he does not appear to receive them as I could wish. However, do not let this alarm you too much, as I have yet hopes that, by my constant and unwearied assiduities, I shall be able

to

to convince my Lord that I have deserved his affection, if I am not able to command it. My sister blames me, and says that I am the author of my own unhappiness, by indulging too quick a sensibility of temper. She also tells me I may expect her in England in a few weeks, a circumstance that has greatly contributed to raise my spirits, which have lately been depressed very much. Indeed, I hope my Lord did not give much credit to the vile paper you mention, as he has lately shewn more attention to me; but has forbid his friend Mr. Dillon his house, which, in my opinion, was not prudent, though he has made me very happy by doing so. Cecilia has made you a promise of spending a week or two at the Vale; I shall embrace the same opportunity, and, if possible,

possible, prevail on my Lord to do so too. If ever I shall again experience a happy moment, it will be that in which I have the pleasure of again seeing you, till which time I remain

Your affectionate daughter,

JULIA ST. LAURENCE.

THE HON. FRANCIS GREVILLE

TO

THE HON. HENRY DILLON.

Brussels, March 10.

I AM just in a contrary mood to that in which your last letter to me was

was wrote; and I bless the charming sex, even from our amiable queen, down to a cinder wench.—In love! I hear you say; Yes! and—what is more wonderful in these hopeful days, —with my own wife. Are not you in amazement? You expected some intrigue or Quixotian adventure. I have long promised you my history, and circumstances being now materially altered, I can relate it without a sigh. But as it is very long, Mrs. Greville's story being interwoven with mine, she has given me leave to refer you to Lady St. Laurence, who is in possession of the first part of it, and to whom I beg to present my best compliments; and that you will also say that Lady Eggerton has promised, on our return to England, to introduce us to her, which we hope very speedily will take place.

place. You know not, Dillon, the infinite obligations I owe to Lady and Sir George Eggerton, for their kind protection of Mrs. Greville, whom they found ill, and, to all appearance, deserted by the world, especially as her story might have excited doubts which it was impossible for her to have cleared, had not the amiable disposition of Lady Cecilia felt for a destitute female, and believed assertions, for the truth of which she could have no other evidence than that of words.

As I did not intend to stay longer at Spa than to try the waters, I was prevailed on to go with some friends, who were about to pay a visit to Lady Eggerton. Knowing her to be a sister of Lady St. Laurence, and having heard that she was a most elegant woman,

man, I wished to see if there was any resemblance between the sisters. The remainder of the story is too long for a letter, but as I shall see you soon, I will relate it.

I was yesterday united a second time to Mrs. Greville, in the presence of some very valuable friends here, and do not intend to stay longer than the Eggerton family are ready to revisit England. I do not believe there exists at this moment a more happy man than myself. - Had this glorious change not happened, I should very soon have been placed by the side of my father, in the family vault; but now I bid adieu to all gloomy ideas. My wife possesses every thing I could wish, but birth; and virtues such as she has shewn herself in possession of, would

ennoble the meanest. I consider her as an inestimable treasure, and as such I shall not introduce her to a common robber of character, therefore don't expect it, Dillon. I shall expect to have a letter by to-morrow's post from you: after that it will be needless to write again. Adieu.

Yours,

FREDERIC GREVILLE.

THE HON. HENRY DILLON

TO

THE EARL OF BELVILLE.

DID I not say I should be able to recall you by the title of Francis Earl of Belville. Your brother died on Monday last, I understand. Peace be to him, say I. Pray what rumour is this of your having found a wife? Why I never knew you had one! Was you afraid to trust me with the secret, or is it the lie of the day only? You were always a mysterious fellow, therefore if you should have half a dozen, instead of one wife, I should not wonder.

H 2

Now

Now to my own affairs, which go on delightfully. What think you of an assignation, of my having been punctual to it, and of my being more blessed by it than ever mortal was before? for faith I don't know but I am caught in little Cupid's net myself. Last night, last night, Belville, was the luckiest to your friend he ever experienced. "The yielding fair one gave me perfect happiness." I am in such a delirium of joy and rapture, that I cannot attempt to describe how all this was accomplished, but I must tell you that we escaped even the vigilance of the Ladies Drayton and Mayne, who were of the party. This is eight o'clock, and I left the masquerade at five, as did my charmer, to return home to her fool of a husband, who, no doubt, thinks himself secure after

after having forbid me his house. I found on my table, on my return home, a letter, informing me of your brother's death; therefore, my own, and your good fortune, would not let me sleep until I had wrote to acquaint you of both. When I shall see the lovely Julia again, she was not able to say; but her woman (who is my friend) is to inform me. This creature has been wondrous serviceable, though she has made rather too free with my purse on this occasion, I must own; but as success has crowned my wishes, she is welcome to the gold. Stolen pleasures have a zest with which no licensed ones can come in competition. I would not exchange the few short moments I spent with the trembling Julia (who was all love and terror) for a month spent in the dull marriage

H 3. fetters,

fetters, in which there is too much security for me. However, the cup of bliss may be filled too full; for I feel that a little sleep is now necessary to recruit my almost exhausted spirits. So as sweet slumbers, and agreeable dreams to you, as those I hope I shall soon experience. I have had my utmost wishes accomplished, and would wish to dream the rapturous scene over again. Adieu.

Yours,

DILLON.

LORD

LORD ST. LAURENCE

TO

LADY ST. LAURENCE.

Tuesday Morn, Three o'Clock.

Madam,

I AM now waiting your return from the arms of a villain, to desire you will immediately return to them again, or wherever you choose to go, to avoid the reproaches of an injured husband. Most truly sorry am I to say I ever united myself to you, as my own family will have to reproach me; and my heart at this moment bleeds for the pangs your infamous conduct will cost an indulgent father, and a truly virtuous, and amiable

H 4

sister.

sister. For myself, I cast you for ever from my bosom, as I will from my remembrance, as soon as my wrongs will permit. My house can no longer be an asylum for an adultress. Therefore choose where you would wish to go, as I will never see you more.

ST. LAURENCE.

M R S. A L L E N

TO

L A D Y M A Y N E.

Portland Place.

I HAVE taken the first opportunity to acquaint your Ladyship of what is going on here. A little after

two

two o'clock my Lord came home, and he ordered me to wait on him in the drawing-room. He was in tears when I entered. "Mrs. Allen," said he, "you was recommended to Lady St. Laurence by Lady Mayne, and I do not doubt your fidelity. Give me leave to ask you, if your Lady ever received a letter from, or wrote one to Mr. Dillon, to your knowledge." I assured him that I knew nothing of it, if she had. He said, very well, wait in the next room. I did so, and about half an hour after he rung, and I answered the bell. He gave me a letter which I was to deliver to my Lady the moment she came home; and he ordered me to tell the other servants not to come into his room, on any pretence whatever, that night. He took up a candle in great agitation, and

went up to his own room. The whole family were in amazement, as they did not know so well as myself the cause of the bustle. In about half an hour my Lady returned, who looked so innocent and beautiful that I could hardly deliver the letter to her. She went up to the dressing-room, where she said, "Allen, is my Lord returned yet?" "Yes, my Lady, and is gone to bed; and has ordered not to be disturbed." "Is he ill? I will go to him this instant." She took up a candle to do so, but I stopped her, saying, "here is a letter my Lord left with me for you." She trembled much as she opened it; and the moment she had read it half through, she fell lifeless at my feet. I was then obliged to get assistance, and it was very long before she came at all to herself.

herself. The moment she recovered sufficiently to recollect herself, she said, "Cruel, barbarous man!—but give me the letter—it was too much for my spirits." She finished it, and burst into a flood of tears.—"Whither can I now fly? My husband's doors are for ever closed against me. Perhaps my father will yet receive his injured, innocent child. I will fly to him this instant."——The servants were all in tears. "I thank you, my good girls," said she, "for your sympathy with me in my distress. It shall never be forgotten by me, though I must leave you. But, be assured (whatever you may hear to the contrary now, or when I am no more—for I can never survive the loss of my husband's affections and this disgrace) that I am as innocent as yourselves of any

H 6

"intention

“intention to dishonour Lord St. Lau-
 “rence.—Come, Sally, said she, (to a girl
 “whom she had brought lately from the
 “country, and who was sobbing as if her
 “heart would burst) you shall go along
 “with me.” And then, she ordered
 a chaise to be sent for immediately, and
 me to put up what she might want for
 a journey. She begged to have pen,
 ink, and paper, and to be left alone till
 she should be able to recollect herself.
 When the chaise came I believe there
 was not a dry eye in the house. I
 heard my Lord walking about his own
 room; but as our orders were not to
 disturb him, he knew not what was
 going on. I went to my Lady.—She
 was on her knees when I entered. She
 gave me a letter for my Lord, which
 was wet with her tears. I asked her
 if she would not choose I should at-
 tend

tend her where she was going. "No," "Allen," she said, "you deserve a better place; I would not involve you in my disgrace." She went down stairs, hardly able to support herself. When she came to my Lord's dressing-room door she fainted away, and we carried her to the parlour. I suppose he was in the bed-room, for I did not hear him. I would have persuaded her to wait until day-light, but she said it was impossible. When the chaise drove off (which it did not do until she had spoken to all the servants) we returned into the hall, and I could not help joining in their sorrow; and indeed, my Lady, if it was not for the reward you promised me, I would be glad I had no hand in it, for, if it is ever found out, my character is lost for ever; therefore I shall take care to
be

be secret. I suppose my Lord will soon discharge me, as my Lady would not take me with her. No one knows where she is gone, but myself; and I shall not tell him, unless she has done so in her letter. I shall not deliver the letter until I hear from you, my Lady, so pray let me know how I am to act.

From your most obedient,

ANN ALLEN.

P.S. I must have your orders before my Lord rises, as no doubt he will make inquiries about my Lady.

LADY

LADY ST. LAURENCE

TO

LORD ST. LAURENCE.

My Lord,

NOTWITHSTANDING the cruelty of your treatment of me, in the unmerited aspersions you have thrown on my character, I shall condescend thus far, to let you know, that as your doors are shut against me, I have flown to the protection of a father, whose honour is as dear to him as your own is to you.

JULIA ST. LAURENCE.

LADY

LADY SUSAN DRAYTON

TO

LADY MAYNE.

St. James's Square.

HOW truly sorry am I that I was deprived, through my illness, of the pleasure of attending you last night, to the Masquerade. But I congratulate you on the success of your stratagem; for Mrs. Johnson has just been here to tell me the whole affair. She says she acted her part, and counterfeited terror and affright so well, that Dillon was charmingly deceived. She does not know that it is to punish a rival, as well as him, that this plan is put in force; nor would I have you let her know

know more of the secret; for when these creatures are told more than they can comprehend, they begin to be affrighted, and reveal all they know, for fear of being brought into a scrape, from which their ignorance cannot extricate them. Let me see you this evening, as I am impatient to hear the news from Portland Place. Dillon has a challenge before this time, I suppose. Don't keep me a moment in suspense, but come to

Yours,

SUSAN DRAYTON.

MISS

MISS MORDAUNT

LADY CECILIA EGGERTON.

MY good Lady, how shall I pierce your heart, when I relate the sufferings of your sister, and the agony of your father, both of which are too severe for my pen to describe? Not to keep you any longer in suspense, last night, at near ten o'clock, a chaise stopped at the Vicarage. It being very unusual for any one to ring at our gate so late, I opened my window, (as I was in my own room undressing) and asked who was there; when a voice I was unacquainted with, said,

said, "It is Lady St. Laurence." I instantly went down, and ordered the gates to be opened; and, on the chaise's coming up to the door, my amiable friend said, "It is your Julia, come for an asylum in your friendly bosom, where she may lodge her sorrows." It was with difficulty that she alighted from the carriage. The girl, whose voice I did not then know, I found to be the widow Selby's daughter, who told me her Lady had not been in bed last night, or tasted any thing all day. We assisted her into the parlour, but she was unable to utter a word. My father got up, and came down stairs, to know what was the cause of our receiving a visit at so late an hour. The instant he entered the room, her Ladyship fell down, and clasped his knees, saying, "You, sir, was

"was ever my friend; pray assure
 "my father that his Julia is innocent,
 "though her Lord has driven her from
 "his house. Fatal was the day you
 "united us." My father was greatly
 affected, but desired her to rise and
 compose herself, and then tell him
 what dreadful misfortune had happen-
 ed to her. "Will you go with me to
 "the Vale, and assure my parent of
 "my innocence? Perhaps he will not
 "receive me. If I am driven from
 "thence, your kind compassion will,
 "I know, afford me shelter for a little
 "time. I shall not trouble you long,
 "for I have received a shock that my
 "frame cannot long support. I would
 "wish to resign my breath in the arms
 "of a parent, and to receive a pardon
 "for being the innocent cause of sor-
 "row to him. I would also request
 "that,

"that, however cruel my Lord has
 "been to me, that my dear parent
 "may not risk his valuable life, nor
 "that of my husband, who is still
 "dear, however hardly he treats me.
 "I have suffered all to preserve him
 "from danger. And when I am at
 "rest in the silent grave, may he be
 "happy." Here she sunk her head
 on my shoulder, and it was some time
 before I could recover her. After-
 wards, she told us, that the night before,
 she went to a Masquerade with Lord
 St. Laurence and a small party. That
 she parted from my Lord about one
 o'clock, as Lady Mayne, who was
 taken ill, was obliged to retire to a
 private room, whither she accompa-
 nied her; that about four, on her
 Ladyship's recovering, and not finding
 her Lord, she concluded he must be
 gone

gone home, and followed immediately : that on her getting to her dressing-room, she had the inclosed letter given her by her woman, and was told that Lord St. Laurence had forbid any one's entering his room. She ordered a chaise and came directly here. We would have had her Ladyship to have gone to bed at our house, and my father promised in the morning to wait on Mr. Osborn, as it was now late, and he would be alarmed ; for indeed I am truly sorry to tell you he is, at this moment, confined to his bed, and has been so for these last ten days. It was impossible, when we said how ill Mr. Osborn was, to prevail on her to stay. She said he would expire before she could embrace him, and that at all events, she would instantly proceed to the Vale. My father and myself attended

attended her. The family was all in bed, but on hearing my father's voice, they immediately came to us. Mr. Osborn rang to know the reason of the alarm at that hour of the night. Lady St. Laurence, on hearing the bell, flew up stairs, and fell lifeless by the side of his bed. We followed, and Mr. Osborn was almost in the condition of her Ladyship. My father told him every circumstance we knew; we raised her, and by water, hartshorn, and other things, she was restored to life. She opened her eyes, and falling into Mr. Osborn's arms, burst into tears. "Do not, my revered parent," she said, "forsake your child. Though she is cast from the bosom of her husband, take her to your parental arms." "Julia," said he, "I have a strict reliance on your virtue; and
 " must

"must have satisfaction for the injury
"done my family by Lord St. Lau-
"rence, who is unworthy of so much
"innocence." "Say not so, my dear
"fir, or you will yourself kill your
"child. Only convince my Lord that
"I am innocent, and I die in peace."

We prevailed on her to go to bed,
and endeavour to rest. My father
went home, I staid at the Vale, at
which place I now am. Mr. Osborn
is extremely ill, and Lady St. Laurence
in a high fever. She talks much of
you. Do, my good Lady, come as
soon as possible to this disconsolate
family. Mr. Osborn, ill as he is, has
been supported in his bed whilst he
wrote to Lord St. Laurence, whose con-
duct we cannot account for. Your
Ladyship must excuse any inaccuracies
in the style of this letter, as I am so
wretched

wretched that I cannot attend to any thing. Should it fail in respect, it would be contrary to the intention of

Your Ladyship's

obliged humble servant,

MARY MORDAUNT.

WILLIAM OSBORN, ESQ.

TO

LORD ST. LAURENCE.

The Vale, March 14.

My Lord,

WERE I not confined to my bed, through illness, I would wait on you myself, and demand an explanation

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I

tion

tion of your late conduct, in regard to my daughter, who most solemnly asserts her innocence, which I have no doubt of being able to prove. When my son Sir George Eggerton arrives in England, you must either make clear your accusations, whatever they may be, or give him satisfaction for the insult you have offered to my family.

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's obedient

WILLIAM OSBORN.

LORD

LORD ST. LAURENCE

JOHN VILLARS, ESQ

Portland Place, March 13, 1786.

I AM now the most unhappy wretch breathing. Villars! I was myself a witness of my own dishonour. My hand shrinks from the office of relating it to you. But be assured I have traced her infamy.—I cannot give her a name that belongs to *me*, and that of *wise*, she is equally undeserving. I do not indulge vague suspicions, my own eyes were my informers. She has left my house, and having flown to her father's, has told him some tale of her innocence, as I have just got a letter from

the good old man, demanding satisfaction. I do not wonder at her being able to deceive him: I too should have been her dupe, had I not been apprized of her unprincipled conduct. I can neither write or think of any thing. Pray come to me, as this has affected me so much that I am really very ill.

Yours,

ST. LAURENCE.

LADY

LADY CECILIA EGGERTON

LORD S. T. LAURENCE.

March 16, 1786.

My Lord,

I NOW write, not in vindication of my sister, as I am certain she needs none; but in pity for the agonizing reflections which will one day recur to your mind. What have you done? Driven an amiable and virtuous wife from your house. You have been deceived by the wicked wretches, to whom you have given a too credulous ear, whose chief happiness consists in the destruction of the peace of families. Inquire into the characters of

your informers, my Lord, and then judge what credit is to be given to their dreadful stories. I would pledge my own honour in defence of my sister's innocence: my life also, if necessary. I would not write thus, as I feel sensibly the affront, but I also feel the pangs that must rend a husband's heart, who drives the wife of his tenderest affections to the grave, and afterwards (when too late to make her any reparation) finds himself the dupe of the artifices of people who, having lost all character themselves, endeavour to reduce that of every other to the level of their own. When I left England, I also left Julia happy in your affections. It is true, since my residence abroad, I have received some letters from her, complaining of what I now fear is too true,—your attachment

ment elsewhere. I have inclosed all
her letters for your perusal, and make
no doubt but your own good sense
will make a proper use of them, and
that I yet shall be happy enough to
see my sister restored to your arms and
that felicity she so truly merits, in
which hope I subscribe myself

Yours,

CECILIA EGGERTON.

As I shall be truly happy, if it will not be in my power to see you

THE COUNTESS OF BELVILLE

Tell Lady Cecilia, I am more interested in her sorrows than

LADY CECILIA EGGERTON.

Portman Square, March 17.

MOST truly do I sympathize with your Ladyship in your affliction, and I have not a doubt but you will yet be able to restore your amiable sister to her peace of mind. My Lord also desires me to inform you that it may be in his power to assist in bringing this about, but he must endeavour to come at the truth of some circumstances first, and that he will instantly go about it. Indeed, my dear Lady Cecilia, we owe all our present happiness to you, and if we can, in any degree, repay the vast

vast debt, I shall be truly happy. As it will not be in my power to see you before you set off for the Vale, pray tell Lady St. Laurence that no one is more interested in her sorrows than *Eliza*, to whom she so kindly once offered her protection, when deserted like herself. My prayers shall be offered for her speedy reconciliation; in the mean time write me how she bears so severe an affliction. Adieu.

Yours sincerely,

ELIZA BELVILE.

178 EXCESSIVE SENSIBILITY,

write to you, without in the least
I have the highest veneration for you

LORD ST. LAURENCE

been but like yourself. But as I will

TO

not give you any more of my

LADY CECILIA EGGERTON.

wishes for your happiness which

Portland Place, March 17, 1786.

Madam,

I RECEIVED yours, by which I am
greatly obliged, and wish it was possi-
ble for me to find that consolation
from your sister's letters you desire.
Had her words and actions been cor-
respondent, I had been too happy. As
it is, she has rendered me miserable,
beyond the power of any conviction
to the contrary. The heart that could
descend so far as to abuse my affec-
tions, could dictate a falsehood in or-
der to deceive you. I am sorry to
write

THE

315

write to you, madam, in this strain, as I have the highest veneration for your many amiable virtues. Had Julia been but like yourself——But as I will not give you pain by a comparison, I will conclude this with the warmest wishes for your happiness.

Your Ladyship's obliged

ST. LAURENCE.

THE

THE HON. HENRY DILLON

THE EARL OF BELVILLE.

March 16.

THAT Lynx-eyed St. Laurence has discovered our amour, and turned his wife out of doors. I am in momentary expectation of a challenge, as the fellow does not want courage. However, he cannot deprive me of joys that are past, and beyond the reach of fate. And those of hereafter, I am not in any anxiety to taste. She must have trusted that mercenary wretch, her woman, who has betrayed her. These females can never keep a secret. It must be so, for I never

once

once hinted it to any but yourself;
and you were abroad at the time, there-
fore could not betray me. However,
it is of no consequence now, I shall
only obtain fresh eclat in the world
if I escape the sword, of which I am
a pretty good master, so let St. Lau-
rence look to himself says

HARRY DILLON.

P. S. Should I hear from St. Lau-
rence, you must go out with me.

THOMAS

THOMAS JOHNSON

TO

JOHN GREY.

O lord John i am so glad u be turn-
 ed to England for i was mity feard u
 wood be heaten hup we wild bests
 in them there outlandis contreys. and
 i hers u hev got a new lady too, do
 cal on me soone for i heve a power a
 things too tel u. mi Wif tels me mi
 Mashter is in a sad takeing somat a
 bought a trigue we lady Lorange, she
 got a fin leter from Lady Mane. you
 doant no how koind she is to hur.
 She cum her one falf and steyd a nour
 or too thut hup in hour parler we mi
 Wif,

Wif, but if u can cal I will steel the
leter she got from Lady Mane, mi Wif
was bliged to be out al won nite about
it, but they rite such confounderd cramp
handes i cant make um hout, but u
may rede it and se what notis the Gen-
tle Fox taks of Missis Johnson. Tha
wil make our fortins she seys, such a
hep of fin Cloathes as she did bring
hom we hur u wood bles your nies to
se. i shal leye mi Mashter and kep
thope mi self and then mi Wif can
tak her plesur a bit mongst um. She
is to be hout tomoro, if you can cum
and tak a glas of wind we me ill tel
you mor, adew

THOMAS JOHNSON.

Wif

THE

THE EARL OF BELVILLE

THE HON. HENRY DILLON.

Portman Square, March 17.

I TAKE the earliest opportunity of answering yours, that you may be informed, whatever step Lord St. Laurence may take, I must decline all farther intimacy with you. The extreme friendship Lady Belville has received from Lady Eggerton and Lady St. Laurence, puts it entirely out of my power to appear as your friend on the present dreadful occasion. And let me also assure you, was this not the case, and all the parties as totally unknown to me

as

LADY

as they were when you first mentioned your intentions of addressing Lady St. Laurence, I would not appear as a second to any man, in so dishonourable a cause as that of seduction. I shall act on this occasion as becomes a man of honour. If you think the contrary, (though I dislike the practice of duelling) I shall be ready to meet you, when and where you please.

BELVILLE.

LADY

LADY CECILIA EGGERTON

T O

THE COUNTESS OF BELVILLE.

Laurel Vale, March 23.

OH how shall I describe to my friend the dreadful scene which here presented itself to my view, on my arrival? I got here about four o'clock yesterday. Every countenance, as my carriage passed through the village, seemed to look on me with an eye of concern and pity.

For the first time in my life, I trembled as I approached the house. I durst not look at the windows, and still more feared to have my questions answered,

answered, when I inquired for my father and sister. The housekeeper attended me, drowned in tears, and said they were both alive; but how long they would continue so, was very doubtful. Miss Mordaunt also came down to me, for this amiable girl has never left Julia's bed-side since she came here, until my arrival. My sister, she told me, could not long support herself, she was sure. I was impatient to see the poor sufferer, and also my father. I went up to his room, he raised his head on my approach, and said, "My dear child, your father thanks you for this attention to him, for, oh, your Julia is not now in a state to afford or receive consolation. Poor girl, she has, for ever, I fear, lost her reason. Have you seen Lord St. Laurence, and learnt

"learnt from him the cause of his bru-
 "tality to your sister? I feel life ebb
 "apace, but I shall expect Sir George
 "will demand satisfaction, though I may
 "never live to see the day.—But go,
 "my dear, and look on your poor sis-
 "ter."—He had hardly spoke the word
 when the door opened, and in came Lady
 St. Laurence; but, alas, not like the
 same creature she had been. Her hair
 was dishevelled, her face pale, and a wild-
 ness in her manner I cannot express.
 She said, "So they have told me my
 "Lord is coming. He won't let me
 "stay here.—He is in this room, and
 "it will be hard if I cannot move him
 "to pity so far, as to allow me to be
 "buried here. Pray tell him," (and
 she looked piteously at me) "do pray,
 "that I am innocent, and will never
 "leave this place. I had a father, but
 "he

“he won’t see me, now my Lord is
“angry.”—I took her burning hand
in mine, and said, “You have a fa-
“ther, and a sister who loves you. Do
“not you know me, who I am?” She
looked at me for some time, and then
said, with a sigh that would have pierced
your heart, “I’m sure I don’t know;
“but don’t frown on me, for my heart
“is very heavy, and will break if
“you do.”

She sat down in a chair by my fa-
ther, and put her hand to her forehead
for some moments. We were silent,
in hopes she would recollect herself
and us. I still held her hand, and she
looked up, and said,—“Cecilia here!”
and burst into tears. I was glad to
find a return of reason, and therefore
did not immediately speak to her; but
my

my father said, "Julia, my dearest child, unless you would see me expire before you, endeavour to compose yourself, and go to bed directly."

"—Does my sister forgive me, Sir, or does she too come to reproach me? What have I done, just Heaven, that I am so punished?"—I then told her that I never entertained an idea of her being, in any degree, guilty of an action that I should blush at; and that I came purposely to console her, and endeavour again to unite her Lord and herself.—"Cecilia, that will never be; but let me know of what he accuses me—for want of affection to him, he never can. I only ask of him to let me die in peace, and of you, my dear sister and father, forgiveness, for causing you this trouble and affliction. Did you

"see

“see Lord St. Laurence?” (I must
“not call him husband.) Did he
“inquire what was become of the
“wretched Julia?—But I had forgot,
“he said he would cast me from his
“remembrance. I shall never forget
“him, cruel man! whilst I retain the
“smallest trace of memory. Tell him
“also that my last request to him, was,
“when he is convinced I deserve it,
“I may be laid in the same grave
“which (when it pleases heaven to
“recall him) he intends to rest in;
“and that no injuries of mine may be
“revenged by any of my valued rela-
“tions. Time, unfortunate man, will
“revenge my wrongs, as he will one
“day be convinced that I loved with
“the truest, and most unbounded af-
“fection.”——She was so much affect-
ed with what she had been saying,
that

that I thought every moment she would have breathed her last. We carried her to her own room, and put her to bed, where she relapsed into her former delirium. She constantly calls on her Lord, and on her father; the latter is (except that he, thank God, retains his senses) little better than herself.

Miss Mordaunt has just informed me my sister is fallen into a slumber, from which may she awake more composed. Pray desire Lord Belville to endeavour by all possible means to find out what Lord St. Laurence's accusations are. He calls my sister, in his letter to herself, "An Adulteress." I would find out who are the parties concerned in this falsehood, and then it may be possible to clear Julia's innocence

cence, for innocent she is I am certain. I am far from well myself, and as I expect Sir George here to-morrow, I will not write to him, as you will shew him this, and say that I desire his immediate attendance. Adieu, my dear Lady.

Yours ever,

CECILIA EGGERTON.

THE EARL OF BELVILLE

TO

LORD ST. LAURENCE.

February 1.

My Lord,

YOU will doubtless be surpris'd at receiving a letter from one who is a total stranger to your Lordship, except by name. But as the intention of this is to restore peace to your bosom, and that of your amiable wife, I shall not ask your pardon for the intrusion. You have been vilely deceived, my Lord, and I pledge my honour to produce proofs of Lady St. Laurence's innocence. Lady Belville tells me she is at this moment, perhaps, breathing her last. I inclose Lady Cecilia Egerton's

gerton's letter to her, which will shew you the immediate necessity of your eyes being opened to a scene of villainy that, when too late, would plunge you into the deepest despair. Read, my Lord, the inclosed packet, it contains a correspondence between Dillon and myself; and then, my Lord, read what is inclosed in this other paper separately—it is a letter from Lady Mayne to an accomplice in her wicked plot; a poor wretch whom she had bribed to personate Lady St. Laurence. I am shocked even to think it possible for one of the female sex to plan and execute so dreadful a design. I came by these letters in consequence of the intimacy that subsists between my servant and Mr. Dillon's, whose wife was the tool of Lady Mayne and Drayton, as they were both (you will see) con-

cerned. My servant was shewn the letter because he could read writing, I believe Dillon's could not. Grey said he could not read it all, but would get one of his fellow servants to tell him what it meant; and the poor fellow brought it to me, as, he said, he saw that Lady St. Laurence had been wronged, and he was sure this letter would be of use to me. Now I hope your Lordship will be convinced, and delay not a moment to fly; and, if not too late, make Lady St. Laurence the reparation she deserves, by restoring her to your affection, and to that world she so truly adorns, which is the wish of

FRANCIS and ELIZA BELVILLE.

LADY

L A D Y M A Y N E

T O

M R S. J O H N S O N.

Johnson,

March 14,

I HAVE sent you the dress to try if it will fit—remember you are this night to personate a great beauty, Lady St. Laurence. Don't forget the name, if Dillon should happen to call you by it; don't speak except in a low whisper; pretend to be in a violent fright, and be sure not to pull off your gloves or mask, as either the one or the other would betray you, and we should lose our joke. Believe me it is nothing else but to laugh at Mr. Dillon, and as he is an admirer of

K 3

yours,

yours, you know you will be revenged.
 Don't mention a word of this to your
 husband, who, poor man, is so stupid,
 that, if you behave well, I may make
 your fortune, and his too—this all de-
 pends on your secrecy in this affair.
 Don't forget what I told you this
 morning. When you see the real
 Lady St. Laurence and myself go into
 a room, and shut the door, you are to
 go with Maxwell to the place whither
 he will carry you, and Dillon will be
 there. You know I read you the
 letter I wrote to him. He will quit
 you the moment he brings you back
 to the room, and you must directly
 send Maxwell to me, and go home.
 Be careful, and you shall be rewarded;
 the contrary conduct will be your ruin;
 but I do not doubt your diligence.
 Bring this letter with you, as I would
 not

not wish it to get into your husband's hands, as he might betray us.

C. MAYNE.

LORD ST. LAURENCE

TO

THE EARL OF BELVILLE.

My Lord,

ACCCEPT the thanks of a man whom you have rendered the happiest, and at the same time, the most wretched creature breathing.—That Lady St. Laurence is innocent I have not now the smallest degree of doubt; but it

K 4

is

is I who have directed the dagger to her bosom. Should she have expired before I implore her forgiveness, before I press her to my bosom, and hear her angelic lips pronounce my pardon (for if she still lives I do not despair of obtaining it), I will not survive that injured excellence. Vile wretches! miscreants! what have I done to you, that the destruction of my peace must be made necessary to your happiness? I have wrote to Sir William Mayne, to acquaint him of the infamy of his wife, and have no doubt but he will resent the injury in a proper manner, and that the wretch will suffer in her turn; not so severely as I have done, for a heart so black as hers, must be totally incapable of feeling. I write this while my chaise is getting ready, as I shall not stop until I reach the
Vale,

Vale, and there my inevitable doom is fixed, and supreme happiness or misery will be my lot in future. The latter idea presents itself with all its attendant horrors, and throws me almost into distraction. Yes, Julia, if your angel spirit is fled ere I arrive, be assured your last request shall faithfully be fulfilled. We will rest in the same grave together, and leave a world envious of virtue like yours. You, my Lord, must excuse the distraction in which this is wrote, and again accept my warmest acknowledgments for the interest you have taken in my affairs; and I hope, should I be fortunate enough to save my wife, that we shall meet Lady Belville and yourself and acknowledge the vast obligation. The chaise waits.

Yours, with the highest esteem,

St. LAURENCE.

MISS MORDAUNT

TO

THE COUNTESS OF BELVILLE.

Laurel Vale, February 7.

AT the desire of Lady Cecilia Egerton I now address your Ladyship, in order to convey her warmest thanks to your Lord and yourself, for the felicity we all experience at this place, which has of late been a scene of the deepest distress; and, though unknown to you myself, let me add my acknowledgments for the restoration of happiness to my valued and amiable Lady St. Laurence. But you are, no doubt, anxious to know the circumstances of the happy revolution to which I allude.

lude. Lord St. Laurence did not reach this place until four o'clock on Sunday. Her Ladyship was then in a slumber; and Lady Eggerton, who had been dispatching letters, was just returned to the room. We were standing at the window fronting the Park Gate, when we saw a chaise stop, which we soon knew to be that of Lord St. Laurence. Lady Eggerton was ready to faint. I gave her a little water, and she recovered sufficiently to go down, and receive him. I also attended her Ladyship, who was in tears.—Lord St. Laurence entered the house in haste and very great agitation. The moment he saw Lady Eggerton, he said, “My wife is no more, I see,”—and reeled to a seat, unable to support himself, or to speak. She immediately relieved his Lordship, by saying “No,

“ Julia still lives ” — “ Then I am the
“ happiest of men ; — let me instantly
“ go to her, and intreat her forgive-
“ ness, though I own I do not deserve
“ it. You, Lady Cecilia, must intreat
“ for me. I have been vilely deceived,
“ be assured, or I could never (loving
“ your sister as I do) have treated her
“ so cruelly.” — We begged that he
would not precipitately enter Lady St.
Laurence’s apartment, as that might
have too violent an effect, in her pre-
sent situation. Lord St. Laurence,
then, begged to see Mr. Osborn, and
obtain his pardon, which, when he
told him the arts that had been used to
deceive him, he did not doubt but Mr.
Osborn’s natural benevolence would
grant. He went to Mr. Osborn’s
apartment, whilst we went to break
the joyful tidings to Lady St. Laurence,
who

who had just awoke from a sleep, which had greatly refreshed her. Lady Egerton took her hand, and said, "Thank Heaven, my dear sister! I hope as you are considerably better now, we shall yet restore you to life and happiness."—"Never!" answered the afflicted sufferer: "My Lord has cast me from his bosom;" while tears flowed fast on the hand of Lady Egerton. "What if Lord St. Laurence, convinced of your innocence, should solicit a reconciliation;—would not my Julia grant it?"—"That is a happiness I never expect, therefore what avails what your Julia would do, or how she would act?"—Lady Cecilia said, "There is a letter just arrived from his Lordship to my father: who knows what joyful tidings it may contain?"—"Oh, my sister! if you

“you love me, haste and bring it instantly to me. If my husband but thinks of me, it will be sufficient, and I shall die in peace.”—She was ready to faint.—Lady Egerton did not attempt to go, and Julia said to me, “Mary, do you go to my father: tell him if he loves his child, he will instantly send the letter, dear to me, let its contents be what they may, because it comes from my husband.—Then he has not quite forgot me,” she said, after a pause of a few minutes. Lady Egerton left the room, and I endeavoured to prepare her to bear with fortitude whatever fate Providence designed her. I hoped the best, as I thought I heard the servant say, his Lord was coming to the Vale,—“Fly, my friend, and get me the letter, or I die.” At that instant Lady Egerton

ton again entered, accompanied by Lord St. Laurence. The curtains of the bed opposite the door were drawn, and the room rather dark.—“Well” said her Ladyship, “Julia, I have heard
“the contents of the letter, and Lord
“St. Laurence is convinced of your
“innocence, and will instantly be
“here.”—She gave a violent scream, and fell on my bosom, as I was sitting, in order to support the pillows on the side of the bed. My Lord instantly ran and clasped her in his arms—
“Look up, my Julia: do not kill your
“St. Laurence, whose whole life to
“come will not be sufficient to expiate
“his crime.” Lady Eggerton could hardly support the scene, nor was I myself able to speak a word. Lady St. Laurence was lifeless in his arms—she breathed not.—“For heaven’s sake
“send,

"send, call some assistance, for I have
 "murdered her," the large tear flow-
 ing on her neck as he spoke.—She gave
 a deep sigh—"She lives! speak to me,
 "my angel, or I shall expire with af-
 "fright." She opened her eyes, and,
 seeing him, said, "Gracious Heaven,
 "my Lord"—and fell on his neck—
 "Yes, Julia, your husband implores
 "forgiveness of his injured wife; pro-
 "nounce only that you hate me not,
 "and I am too blessed."—"Speak
 "not so," said she, "you are my only
 "happiness, I shall now die content
 "in my husband's arms."—The phy-
 sician entered, and desired we would
 immediately leave the room: if we
 did not, he could not answer for the
 life of his patient, as he feared we had
 not acted with caution enough. It
 was with difficulty Lord St. Laurence
 was

was prevailed on to leave the room, which nothing but the fear of losing his wife could have prevailed with him to have done. Lady Eggerton had gone to her father's apartment, being unable to stay longer in her sister's; my Lord and myself followed, and I was again witness to a scene almost as affecting as that I had just left. The good old gentleman could hardly support the tide of joy which encompassed him, and indeed I greatly fear he will not many days survive this happy meeting.

I have now the pleasure to acquaint your Ladyship that Lady St. Laurence is entirely out of danger. His Lordship never quits her room. What thanks do we not all owe to Lord Belville, for the part he, as well as
your

your Ladyship, has taken, in the unjust sufferings of my amiable friend ! Sir George Eggerton arrived last night, and were it not for the illness of Mr. Osborn, we should be a truly happy party. Lady Cecilia desires me to say, that, if your Ladyship could be prevailed on, with your Lord, to visit this place, we should all esteem it a most particular obligation. But Lord St. Laurence has written by this post to Lord Belville, and no doubt has made this request. I am this moment sent for to attend my sick friend, therefore I shall obtain your forgiveness in concluding this hastily, having only time to subscribe myself

Your Ladyship's

most obedient,

MARY MORDAUNT.

THE COUNTESS OF BELVILLE

TO

LADY CECILIA EGGERTON.

MOST truly does your Eliza participate in all your felicity, and exult in having had it in her power to give her friend the smallest proof of the extreme gratitude she always feels for herself and family, who bestowed both life and happiness on her, in restoring to her all she holds dear on earth; which, indeed, I have been very near losing again, though, thank heaven, my husband is now safe. On the evening before last, my Lord received a letter, which, I saw, gave him great uneasiness. He left the room, and answered

answered it. I begged to know what had disturbed him. He desired to be left alone; but said that to-morrow I should be made acquainted with the contents of the letter. I did not see him again until supper time. I retired early to rest, as, in my present condition, I am advised to do so: my Lord soon followed. He rose early, but as he usually does so, I was not alarmed. When I came down to breakfast, I was told my Lord desired me not to wait for him, which somewhat surprised me, as I had not heard him speak of any engagement. But what was my astonishment when he returned about two hours after, and said, "Eliza, I have
 "been witness to the most dreadful
 "scene you can imagine; but do not
 "affright yourself, you see I am safe—
 "but, Dillon is dead—not by my
 "hands."

"hands." I was ready to faint; but soon recovering myself, he told me what follows: "Last night, when you saw a visible uneasiness on my countenance, I received this letter from Mr. Dillon."

THE HON. HENRY DILLON

THE EARL OF BELVILLE.

February 22, 1786.

My Lord,

I THINK in your last you disclaimed any farther acquaintance with me; but said, if I considered you as acting any way dishonourably, you would meet me when and where I pleased. Was delivering a private correspondence between us into the hands of

Lord

Lord St. Laurence, like a man of honour? (not to mention the word of friend.) It is impossible for you to defend this action; therefore I expect you to meet me to-morrow morning, at six o'clock, at Grosvenor Gate, Hyde Park, from whence we will proceed to a proper spot, where I shall expect satisfaction for your treatment of

HENRY DILLON.

“ I spent all the evening in settling
 “ some necessary matters; and went
 “ this morning to the place appointed,
 “ where I met Dillon, attended by a
 “ friend, as I was also. He took off
 “ his hat, and desired me to fix the
 “ spot. I left it to the gentlemen who
 “ attended, which was no sooner done
 “ than

“ than he desired me to fire, which I
“ declined; he then instantly put the
“ pistol to his own forehead, and it
“ went off before any one could reach
“ him, to prevent it.—He fell, gave a
“ groan, and died instantly. You know
“ not, Eliza, how the fate of this rash
“ young man has affected me. He
“ was once my intimate friend, and I
“ believe had a good heart: but he
“ was led on by vanity, and a hand-
“ some person, to attempt any thing
“ that might contribute to his pleasures,
“ or gain him eclat, as a man of gal-
“ lantry. I am sorry to say that, to
“ the entire disgrace of your sex, he
“ was too successful. He has fatally,
“ for once, been the dupe of the arts
“ of two infamous women. Lord St.
“ Laurence was his friend: and I
“ doubt not but on reflection on his
“ conduct,

“conduct, he found it not to be justified by that silent monitor within, Conscience; and he considered the only reparation he could make, was to yield his life a sacrifice.”

—My Lord has been so melancholy ever since this dreadful catastrophe, that I have made him promise to join your party at the Vale, which we shall do on Monday next. I must also inform you that Sir William Mayne has ordered her Ladyship to quit his house, and intends to sue for a divorce. Lady Susan Drayton has consoled herself under this disgrace, by running off with Mr. Maynard, to whom, had not this affair happened, she was to have been very soon married. I cannot say I am sorry for either of them, as vice like theirs must always meet its punishment;

punishment; whilst innocence and virtue, like that of the truly amiable Lady St. Laurence, will always insure itself a reward. I hope to find your good father better when we come to the Vale, and that he may be able to join the general joy, is the most sincere prayer of

ELIZA BELVILLE.

M. R. MORDAUNT

THE EARL OF C—

The Vicarage, Feb. 24, 1786.

My Lord,

IN a very short space of time, that family which is the nearest on earth to your Lordship, by the ties of natural affection, and the dearest to me by those of friendship, has experienced vicissitudes most interesting and instructive. An union of all that is desirable in woman, and all that is respectable in man, promised uninterrupted felicity to Lord and Lady St. Laurence. The powers of darkness beheld the triumphs of virtue with envy, and, like the malignant spirit attempting

tempting to seduce our first parents, under the guise of whatever is seducing to sense, endeavoured to introduce wretchedness into an amiable family, by introducing vice. Their infernal engines have recoiled on their own heads; and the general issue of the scenes they moved, will impress, I hope, on every mind concerned in it, a lively sense of the vanity and wretchedness of a fashionable, artificial, and unprincipled life, in capital cities. This, my Lord, is a subject on which I cannot refrain from saying something, on whatever occasion it is introduced. I took the liberty to write a letter about it some time ago to Lord St. Laurence, little thinking that his own experience would so soon prove the truth of what I wanted to establish,—that it is in the country that men of rank and fortune

may live with the greatest dignity, happiness, and advantage to their country. I do not mean that they should retire to their country seats, as into hiding places from society; but that they should live in the ancient hospitality, do good to their neighbours, become acquainted with their situations, and thence know how to promote their interests in parliament, and having their hearts, as it were, still at home; only visit London at stated seasons, and on particular occasions.

King James I. was wont to exhort the nobility and gentry to live at their country seats rather than in town. In town, he said, they were like ships at sea, which shewed very small, but in the country they were like ships in rivers, which seemed great things. But

Yves

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Well. it

But—

it is not this motive of vanity, or a desire of respect only, that naturally induces an inclination to rural life: there is in rural life, and rural objects, and in all the magnificence of nature with which these are connected, something that delights and captivates the soul. The monarch who recommended the country to his courtiers, was fond of the country himself; and amidst all the charms of royalty, his progeny still loves the forest, and frequents the chase; and finds in rural amusements the sweetest relaxation from the cares of a crown.—

“The high-born maid, whose gay apartments
“ Shine

“ With the rich produce of each Indian mine,

“ Sighs for the open fields, the past’ral hook,

“ To sleep delightful near a warbling brook;

“ And loves to read the ancient tales that tell,

“ How queens themselves fetch’d water from the
“ well.”

—But

—But I must not forget to execute the commission which I have received from Mr. Osborn, who, though much better, is still confined to his bed, and which is the occasion of my troubling your Lordship with these favourite notions of mine at this time. He understands that Lord St. Laurence has acquainted your Lordship with all that has happened; and he joins in the most pressing manner, his request, that you would complete, by your presence, the happiness of the meeting at the Vale. This re-union of Lord and Lady St. Laurence may be considered, in some respects, as a subject of greater congratulation than their marriage itself: since they are taught, though by severe pangs, what rocks to avoid in the sea of life, and how perfectly they may confide in each other's affections.

— T H E E N D.



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